

# Characteristics of Community Innovation

*A Review of the 2013 and 2014 Bush Prize Winners*

**F E B R U A R Y 2 0 1 6**

*This review commissioned by:*



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# What is the Bush Prize?

The Bush Prize for Community Innovation is an annual award that honors and supports innovative organizations with a track record of making great ideas happen. Winners are selected for their pattern of innovative solutions; pattern of using inclusive, collaborative, and resourceful processes; and leadership that fosters a culture of innovation. They receive a package of recognition, including a flexible grant of 25 percent of the organization's last fiscal year budget, up to \$500,000. The Bush Prize is part of the Bush Foundation's Community Innovation program, designed to inspire and support communities to create innovative solutions to their challenges. Each year, the Bush Foundation selects Bush Prize winners from the geographic region it serves: Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota, and the 23 Native nations that share the same geography.

## What is the purpose of this review?

The purpose of this review is to share the processes and elements of organizational culture that help organizations in their pursuit of community innovations. Our hope is that by providing examples and analyzing themes within this review of how the 18 Bush Prize winners from 2013 and 2014 achieved their innovations and foster a culture of innovation, readers will have a greater understanding of the factors and approaches that are common among organizations that have demonstrated a pattern of community innovation.

The findings from this review may inform future Community Innovation program refinements, including updates to the Community Innovation Process diagram, adjustment in the Community Innovation team's grantmaking approach, and refinements to the team's support of grantee problem-solving efforts. This review highlights common findings and themes we identified among the Bush Prize winners regarding the following research questions:

- What does a culture of innovation look like? How does leadership help to create a culture of innovation?
- What is the process that achieved a community innovation? Who was involved? How are issues identified? What community assets are used? In what ways is the process inclusive, collaborative, and resourceful?
- How is community innovation different or distinct from other kinds of innovation?

## Methods

As a part of this review, Wilder Research conducted a series of interviews with each of the 2013 and 2014 Bush Prize winners. Specifically, we conducted interviews with organizational leaders and key stakeholders they identified. The leaders we interviewed most often serve their organizations as Executive Directors, CEOs, and Presidents. In some cases, group interviews were conducted with multiple leaders at a single organization (for example, for one winner, we conducted a group interview with their Executive Director and Director of Advancement); we conducted group interviews for three of the 2013 winners and four of the 2014 winners. For 2013 winners, Wilder Research interviewed three stakeholders per winner; for 2014 winners, we interviewed two stakeholders per winner (with the exception of one winner for which Wilder Research was only able to connect with one stakeholder). Wilder Research also reviewed internal documentation provided by the Bush Prize winners that they deemed important for understanding their community innovation, such as strategic planning documents, organizational charts, and evaluation frameworks and reports.

It should be noted that interviews with the 2013 and 2014 Bush Prize winners had different areas of focus: while the 2013 interviews focused much more on the winners' processes, the 2014 interviews also focused on what a culture of innovation looks like. Because of that, certain components of this report may rely more heavily on one set of interviews than the other. Interviews from the 2013 Bush Prize winners and stakeholders were retroactively analyzed using the framework developed when analyzing the 2014 interviews, where applicable.

Lastly, this review illuminates how 2013 and 2014 Bush Prize winners achieved their innovations. Much of our conversations with winners and their stakeholders provided anecdotal evidence pointing to their innovations being more effective, equitable, or sustainable than existing/previous approaches, but only a few winners have conducted their own evaluations. Conducting original evaluations of winners' innovations or reviewing their existing evaluations was not in the scope of this project.

# The 2013 and 2014 Bush Prize winners

A brief description of the Bush Prize winners and examples of the work they are engaged in can be found in the appendix.

## 2013 winners

### **Anu Family Services**

St. Paul, MN

Field: Foster care, child welfare and well-being

### **Behavior Management Systems**

Rapid City, SD

Field: Mental health

### **Cloquet Area Fire District**

Cloquet, MN

Field: Fire protection and emergency services

### **Community Violence Intervention Center**

Grand Forks, ND

Field: Community violence prevention and intervention

### **Four Bands Community Fund**

Cheyenne River Indian Reservation

Field: Finance, economic development

### **Great Plains Food Bank**

Fargo, ND

Field: Hunger relief, food access

### **Juxtaposition Arts**

Minneapolis, MN

Field: Arts, youth development, city planning

### **Northern Plains Sustainable Agriculture Society**

La Moure, ND

Field: Agriculture, seed breeding

### **Project PRIME**

Rapid City, SD

Field: K-12 math education, higher education

## 2014 winners

### **Cannon River Watershed Partnership**

Northfield, MN

Field: Environment preservation, water quality

### **Community of Care**

Arthur, ND

Field: Older adults in rural areas

### **Destination Rapid City**

Rapid City, SD

Field: Economic development

### **Domestic Violence Crisis Center**

Minot, ND

Field: Domestic violence intervention

### **Face It TOGETHER Sioux Falls**

Sioux Falls, SD

Field: Addiction management and care

### **First Peoples Fund**

Rapid City, SD

Field: Arts, cultural preservation

### **Lanesboro Arts**

Lanesboro, MN

Field: Arts, community development

### **Legal Services of North Dakota**

Bismarck, ND

Field: Legal services and assistance

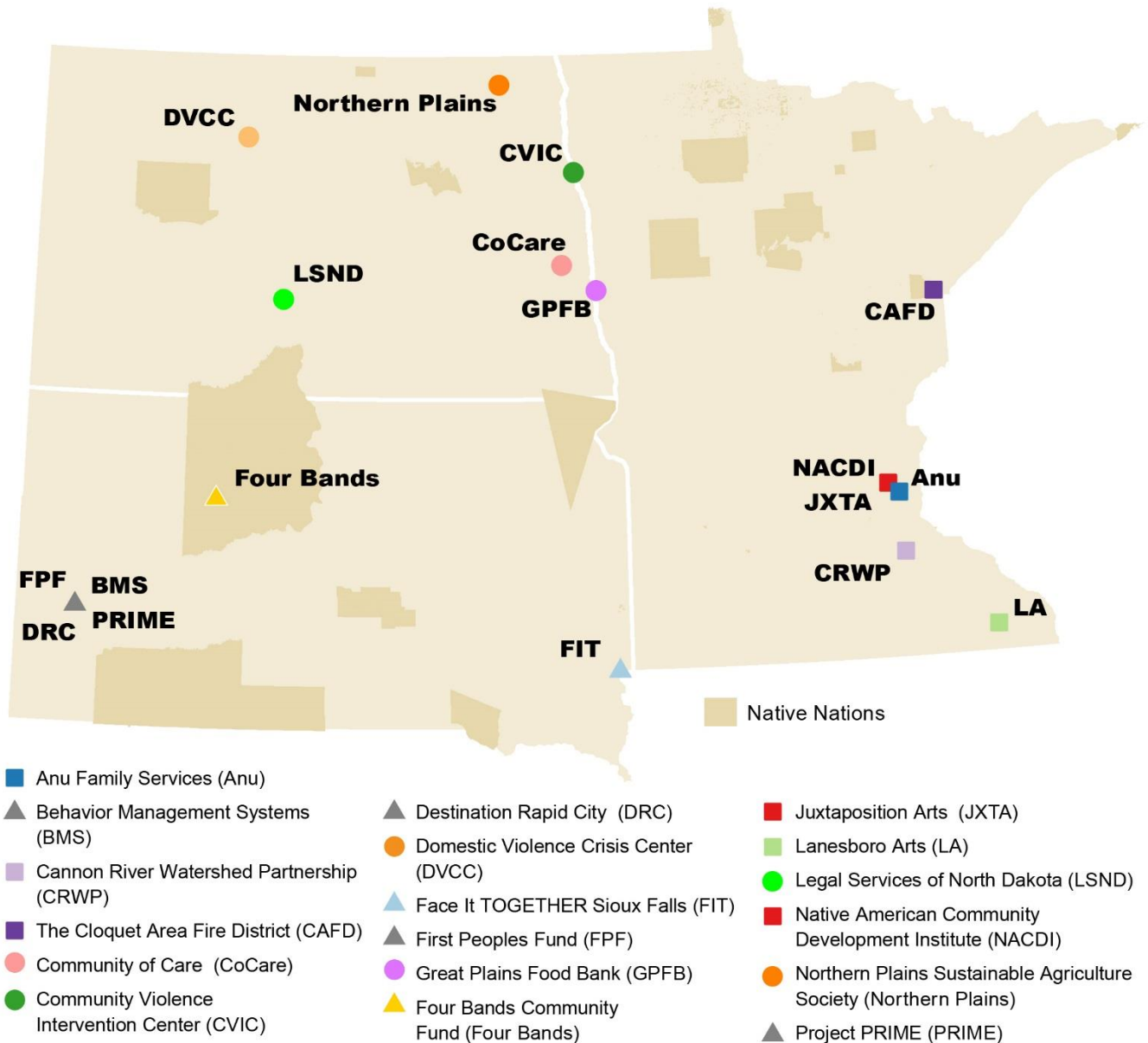
### **Native American Community Development Institute**

Minneapolis, MN

Field: Community development, arts

Figure 1 illustrates where the Bush Prize winners are located. Although the winners are spread across the Bush Foundation’s service area, there are concentrations in Rapid City, South Dakota, and the Twin Cities in Minnesota.

**1. Map of 2013 and 2014 Bush Prize winners**





# What does a “culture of innovation” look like?

The Bush Prize is given to organizations that exhibit a culture of innovation, which is understood by the Bush Foundation as internal characteristics, values, and systems that make it possible for an organization to produce a pattern of innovative solutions. Through interviews with Bush Prize winners and stakeholders, Wilder Research developed four characteristics of a culture of innovation. This section of the report provides a foundation for understanding these characteristics, and how winners exemplify them. The characteristics of a culture of innovation include:

- **Sharing ownership**, which happens through listening, building relationships, and recognizing expertise
- **Fostering creativity**, which happens through welcoming ideas, and being proactive about vetting and pursuing them
- **Learning from failure**, which happens through reframing risk, emphasizing learning in instances of failure, and continuing despite setbacks
- **Committing to community**, which happens through developing shared community vision, and representing the community

## *How does leadership influence a culture of innovation?*

An integral part of a culture of innovation is how an organization is led. Bush Prize winners and their stakeholders alike gave credit to leadership for their role in creating a culture of innovation in their organizations, collaboratives and partnerships, and communities. Findings regarding a culture of innovation and how leadership promotes such a culture are presented jointly in this section of the review.

## Sharing ownership

Sharing ownership with community members, partners, and internally among staff members results in an innovation that is community-owned. Bush Prize winners share ownership of their innovations by listening, building relationships, and recognizing the expertise of stakeholders involved in achieving their innovation (Figure 2).

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### 2. Bush Prize winners that noted the importance of various aspects of sharing ownership

	2013	2014	Total (N=18)
Listening	9	9	18
Building relationships	8	9	17
Recognizing expertise	7	6	13

### *Listening*

The importance of listening for an effective community innovation process was noted by all 18 Bush Prize winners, with a Community of Care leader saying, “You have to be a good listener, to listen to those who live here and what their needs are.” Through listening, it was noted, the leaders of Bush Prize winner organizations gained the trust of stakeholders and partners, resulting in a more meaningful and effective community innovation process.

*If you don't have empathy or listen to what someone else has to say or what someone's going through, that's going to cause issues. – Legal Services of North Dakota stakeholder*

Developing trust through listening also allows constituents to begin to view the winner organization as a safe space to voice their opinions and community needs. This dynamic supports the creation of a culture where winners are continually able to identify and address needs that arise in their communities. For example, Native American Community Development Institute hosts a monthly engagement series that is open to the public, and a leader said that “people come to rely on it as an opportunity to come together and create new initiatives.” By building a reputation of listening to their constituents, a Face It TOGETHER Sioux Falls leader likewise mentioned that members of their community “knew that they could come [to Face It TOGETHER Sioux Falls] and say, ‘There’s a need here. Can you help us figure this out?’”

Listening can be challenging due to the complexity it adds to the process. Winners noted that considering additional perspectives in decision-making can slow the work. However, a Cannon River Watershed Partnership leader stated the importance of honoring all

community members' viewpoints, even those that they disagree with, saying, "Ultimately they're a part of the community and a part of the solution."

*There's this constant juggling of taking in new information, assessing, and prioritizing.*  
– Face It TOGETHER Sioux Falls stakeholder

### ***Building relationships***

Building relationships is another way in which winners share ownership, with 17 of 18 Bush Prize winners mentioning its importance. A Lanesboro Arts leader stated that "relationship building is the most vital thing you can do to see yourself as a leader or be seen as a leader." Leaders from Domestic Violence Crisis Center and Cannon River Watershed Partnership extolled the benefits of building relationships with community members, suggesting that word-of-mouth communication from constituents who care about their work can result in increased effectiveness.

*Any time you bring people in and they buy in to your project, that's a positive because they go out in the community and talk to friends and coworkers.*  
– Domestic Violence Crisis Center leader

*A project needs a champion. Often a project that's successful has one or two people who are not necessarily the leader but somebody who is thoughtful and asks the right questions, who pushes to keep the project moving forward when it stalls. They're asking key things of their neighbors or they're willing to talk to their neighbors.*  
– Cannon River Watershed Partnership leader

Winners primarily build relationships through conversations with community members, potential partners, and others necessary to achieve their innovations. According to winners, these conversations include at least some discussion of the innovation toward which winners are striving. In pursuit of their innovation, a Destination Rapid City leader talked with "every American Legion, Kiwanis club, senior retirement center, city council person." Relationship building was seen as a useful skill for leaders of community innovation processes to possess, with a Community Violence Intervention Center stakeholder saying, "[Community Violence Intervention Center leader] is a very dynamic and open person, a real natural relationship-builder."

Strong internal relationships are also important to a culture of innovation. A Domestic Violence Crisis Center leader suggested that "you have to have good lines of communication with the staff and board." The benefit of strong relationships with partners was also noted, with a Legal Services of North Dakota stakeholder saying, "[Legal Services of North Dakota leader] did what came naturally to him; he worked on building relationships and developed partnerships throughout the state."

## *Recognizing expertise*

Sharing ownership also occurs when community members, partners, and others are recognized as experts regarding their community and how to pursue a community problem-solving process. In interviews, 13 Bush Prize winners said that recognizing expertise was important for their innovations. Some leaders spoke of this aspect of their work in terms of honoring the experiences of community members and sharing power with them.

*If I'm considered the expert in the room, community members want to know what I think. We really try to say, 'What do you think? It's not our job to tell you the answer because we don't know if that's the right answer for you.'*  
– Cannon River Watershed Partnership leader

*One of the things that Juxtaposition Arts really tries to do is set up opportunities for everybody to share their expertise. [They say], 'This is our overall vision based on shared values; we want you to bring your super powers to it.'* – Juxtaposition Arts stakeholder

Moreover, by recognizing the expertise of a wide variety of stakeholders, the collection of skills and resources available to a community innovation process is expanded by additional people's knowledge, connections, and experiences. In this way, recognizing expertise contributes to increased effectiveness of a community innovation process, with a Destination Rapid City leader saying, "We don't know how to fix everything, but we can find someone who does."

It is also important for a culture of innovation to acknowledge the expertise of internal staff or team members. Anu Family Services' leader gave an example of recognizing their staff's expertise, and connected the idea of recognizing expertise internally to "operating flatly" within their organization. In this way, a culture of innovation entails honoring staff's perceptions and experiences, even if their perceptions and experiences contradict directives from supervisors.

*I had a worker call me last week. I supervise her supervisor's supervisor. She said, 'You sent me an email to do this and I don't want to do it. I think it's a bad idea.' I said, 'That makes good sense to me. You ought to not do that.'* – Anu Family Services leader

## Fostering creativity

Fostering creativity drives the generation and pursuit of ideas. Bush Prize winners foster creativity by welcoming ideas, and being proactive about vetting and pursuing these ideas (Figure 3).

### 3. Bush Prize winners that noted the importance of various aspects of fostering creativity

	2013	2014	Total (N=18)
Welcoming ideas	9	9	18
Being proactive	6	9	15

#### *Welcoming ideas*

All Bush Prize winners noted the importance of welcoming ideas for a culture of innovation. A Lanesboro Arts leader suggested that welcoming ideas is “about not being set in your ways, it’s about deviating from the script.” Additionally, welcoming ideas means being “open to forces that are out of your control” (a Destination Rapid City leader) and exhibiting flexibility regarding preconceived ideas of how a process or task should be accomplished. Similarly, a Face It TOGETHER Sioux Falls stakeholder explained this concept as “trying to stay as close to the line that we’ve set, but recognizing the line may need to change, too.” A Native American Community Development Institute’s leader spoke about their own dedication to welcoming new ideas:

*“You have to be open. You never know where that opportunity will take you, and that’s where innovation lies. [You have to be] connected to letting go of control.”*  
– Native American Community Development Institute leader

Welcoming ideas was also framed as a problem-solving strategy. A Cannon River Watershed Partnership leader commented, “We really welcome any new idea as a way to get around something or figure out a way to do it.” Additionally, welcoming ideas was linked to the idea of humble leadership, with a Project PRIME stakeholder saying, “[Project PRIME leaders] are humble enough to know that they don’t know everything, and are open to learning.” Cloquet Area Fire District leader asserted that a community innovation’s success relies on the humility of its leaders:

*If leadership isn’t willing to admit that they don’t have all the answers, you’re not going to succeed. You have to be able to sit down with someone and say, we’re weak here... You have to be able to do that sincerely and really mean it when you say that you need their help.* –Cloquet Area Fire District leader

Additionally, welcoming ideas from diverse sectors was noted as an aspect of a culture of innovation, with one Community of Care stakeholder explaining the benefit of exchanging ideas across sectors:

*As a community banker, I wondered why anyone was interested in my opinion; it seemed a long way from my expertise. But I understood after attending the meeting that our footprint was very similar. – Community of Care stakeholder*

It was also noted that fostering creativity is vital because community processes do not necessarily work in perpetuity, and because fields are constantly changing, so organizational relevancy relies on changing with it.

*What we found is that what we used to do doesn't necessarily work anymore. You have to look at ways to change things up. – Lanesboro Arts stakeholder*

### ***Being proactive***

Fifteen Bush Prize winners mentioned the importance of being proactive in pursuing their innovation, with a Legal Services of North Dakota leader stating, “A culture of innovation requires leadership to be proactive.” To keep momentum going within a community innovation process, it is important “to be incredibly proactive with vetting new ideas and turning them into substance” (a Face It TOGETHER Sioux Falls leader). Similarly, a Juxtaposition Arts stakeholder mentioned an instance in which the organization proactively pursued an idea, saying, “They started to just tinker and make and do. They didn’t ask for permission.” Domestic Violence Crisis Center also spoke about the importance of following idea generation with action:

*You have to listen and observe and take that leap of faith... You have to move forward and hope it turns out, and if it doesn't, you have to step back and figure out a Plan B. – Domestic Violence Crisis Center leader*

The necessity of creating and pursuing actionable tasks was talked about more deeply by winners whose innovations involved a larger number of partners (10 or more). To ensure proactivity in the midst of larger partnerships, Community Violence Intervention Center and Behavior Management Systems each hired a full-time coordinator.

*Every meeting has an action and every meeting has an outcome. You're not just sitting there drinking coffee and asking, "What's going to happen now?" – Behavior Management Systems stakeholder*

Two winners also mentioned the importance of modeling proactivity for their staff and their community as a way to build a culture of innovation. A Lanesboro Arts leader mentioned that they modeled investing in their community, saying that they “gave others

permission to invest in [the community], too.” This sentiment was echoed by a Native American Community Development Institute leader as well: “Taking initiative is contagious; it rubs off on people.”

## Learning from failure

Learning from failure is necessary for any innovation process; all winners mentioned at least one instance in which they were not successful in achieving their initial goal. Bush Prize winners exemplify this characteristic of a culture of innovation by reframing risk, emphasizing learning in instances of failure, and continuing after setbacks (Figure 4).

### 4. Bush Prize winners that noted the importance of various aspects of learning from failure

	2013	2014	Total (N=18)
Reframing risk	4	9	13
Emphasizing learning	5	9	14
Continuing after setbacks	7	6	13

### *Reframing risk*

A component of learning from failure is reframing risk. Thirteen winners talked about reframing risk, or simply reframed risk in their interviews. Risk-taking is inherent in community innovation because often the result of pursuing a new idea is unknown. Rather than something to be avoided, risk was reframed by winners as a necessary component of their work. A Cannon River Watershed Partnership leader commented, “We just expect that things we do won’t work sometimes,” and a Legal Services of North Dakota stakeholder noted, “You have to be willing to make errors.”

When asked about assessing the risk associated with pursuing a new idea, Lanesboro Arts and Native American Community Development Institute leaders connected taking risks with being proactive, with the Lanesboro Arts leader saying, “Sometimes people get so caught up in the risk, but the risk is actually in doing nothing.”

*NACDI is of the stance that we should try something; we have nothing to lose. That's a cavalier attitude, but it separates us from others in the region. Best case scenario: we get things like the Bush Prize. Worst case scenario: it doesn't work out and we go back to the lab and try something different.*

*– Native American Community Development Institute leader*

Some negative financial-related consequences of taking risks were mentioned by winners, with a Native American Community Development Institute leader saying, “A lot of times [experimenting] has hurt the funding and sustainability of the organization.” However, two winners mentioned that their risk taking has become better informed, with a First Peoples Fund leader saying, “Over the years, we’ve learned how to take risks, but to do it with our eyes open.”

### ***Emphasizing learning***

Instances of failure are inevitable during innovation processes. In response to failure, it is important to intentionally reflect on and learn from what went wrong (this was noted by 14 winners), which contributes to effectively moving forward. A Domestic Violence Crisis Center stakeholder noted the importance of explicitly examining failure: “Why did it not work? What could we have done better?”

Additionally, a few winners mentioned that they think of failures as “things that worked out differently than what we thought [they might when we began]” (Anu Family Services leader). This mindset highlights that despite failure, these winners focused on reflecting on the situation, learning from it, and moving forward. This stance was characterized by a Juxtaposition Arts leader as follows:

*I say “unsuccessful yet.” It didn’t turn out quite like we wanted, and then we learn from that and do it differently next time. – Juxtaposition Arts leader*

### ***Continuing after setbacks***

The last step in the cycle of learning from failure, according to 13 winners, is continuing with their work after an instance of failure with the knowledge gained from intentional reflection about what went wrong. According to a Domestic Violence Crisis Center stakeholder, “You get up, dust yourself off, and take off again, and hopefully you don't hit the wall as hard again.”

### **Committing to community**

Committing to community intertwines an organization and its work in the values of their community. Bush Prize winners commit to their communities by developing a shared vision with their community, and by representing their community (Figure 5 on the next page). By developing a shared vision with their community and crafting their organization’s work around that vision, Bush Prize winners serve as a concrete and genuine example of the community’s strengths, needs, and vision.



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**5. Bush Prize winners that noted the importance of various aspects of committing to community**

	<b>2013</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>Total (N=18)</b>
Developing shared vision	6	8	14
Representing the community	4	9	13

***Developing shared vision***

A commitment to community includes identifying how their organization’s work fits into a larger, shared community vision (this was noted by 14 winners). In essence, developing shared vision is a way to ensure that the result of a community innovation process is meaningful for the community within which the innovation occurs. A First Peoples Fund stakeholder noted, “We really try to work hand in hand with [our] communities.” By intertwining their work with the vision of their community, Bush Prize winners delivered innovations that are seen as valid and useful by community members, according to their stakeholders. Winners developed shared vision by spending time with and learning from multiple community members, adopting community values as their own, and changing their plans based on constituent input. For example, the Native American Community Development Institute spent three years collecting input from the community and compiled their results into a blueprint documenting the shared vision of the community.

*It was never about us; it was always about the community and how to drive the community.  
– Destination Rapid City leader*

The role of leadership in developing shared vision was mentioned by stakeholders of a number of winners (Anu Family Services, Community Violence Intervention Center, Great Plains Food Bank, Juxtaposition Arts, Lanesboro Arts). These stakeholders acknowledged that while a shared vision is developed with community, it is the leaders’ commitment to that vision that ultimately pushes a community innovation process to completion.

***Representing the community***

Additionally, 13 winners had the goal of representing the many facets of their community, which is another way that they committed to their community. Through regular and intentional communication with their community, organizations can gain a thorough and nuanced sense of their community’s make-up and voice. In order to effectively represent their community, Bush Prize winners spoke about the importance of having staff with a diversity of ideas and experiences, and in particular having staff whose ideas and

experiences align with their community's. By embedding diverse perspectives within the organization, Bush Prize winners felt they were able to more accurately and genuinely represent and have a relationship with their community.

*I want to make sure our team has all types of people who can connect with all types of people. I like the fact that no matter who walks in the door, we can find somebody to connect with that person. It's very intentional. – Face It TOGETHER Sioux Falls leader*

# Community Innovation Process

Drawing on the published literature from the field as well as the Bush Foundation's history of supporting community problem-solving, Wilder Research and the Bush Foundation co-developed the Community Innovation Process diagram in 2013 (Figure 6). This diagram depicts one process that communities can use to achieve community innovations. The Bush Foundation does not claim that this is the only way a community innovation is achieved, but rather it is a visual representation of the approach to innovation that the Bush Foundation supports with the Community Innovation program.

The Community Innovation Process includes four phases:

- Identify need
- Increase collective understanding of the issue
- Generate ideas
- Test and implement solutions

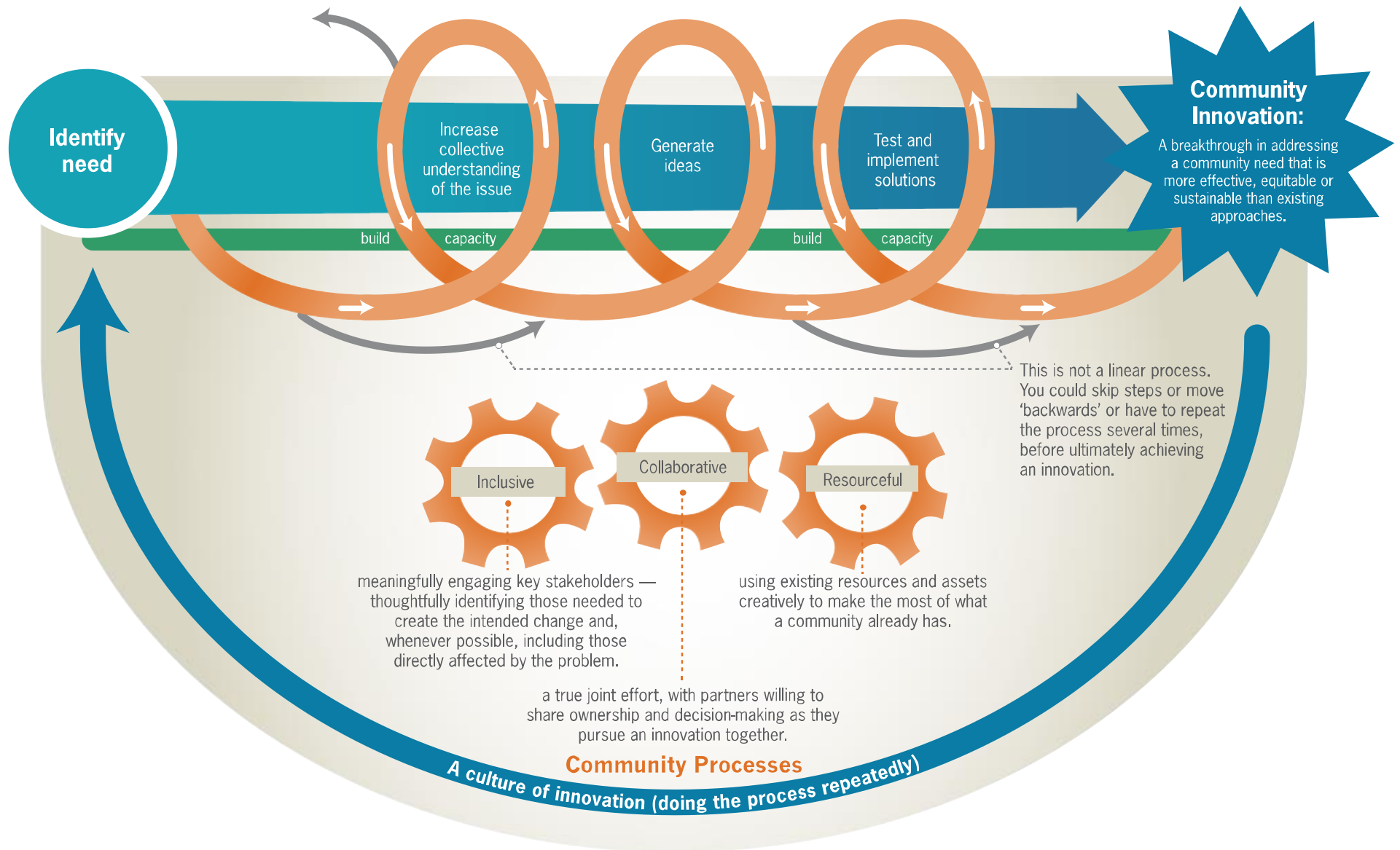
At every phase, the community problem-solving process is:

- Inclusive: Meaningfully engaging key stakeholders – thoughtfully identifying those needed to create the intended change and, whenever possible, including those directly affected by the problem
- Collaborative: A true joint effort, with partners willing to share ownership and decision-making as they pursue an innovation together
- Resourceful: Using existing resources and assets creatively to make the most of what a community already has

Overall, 2013 Bush Prize winners noted that the Community Innovation Process diagram mostly reflects the process they used to complete their community innovation. Findings from interviews with the 2013 Bush Prize winners are testament that the process depicted in the diagram was taking place to some degree before the diagram was developed. (The 2014 Bush Prize winners were not asked these questions.)

*The model fits what we did. I hadn't seen this model before we were awarded the Bush Prize. We did follow it; it's pretty close to exactly what we did. – Cloquet Area Fire District leader*

6. Bush Foundation's Community Innovation Process diagram



## Identify need

Bush Prize winners had multiple ways of identifying the needs of their community, including informally identifying a need of their community, formally identifying a need through primary or secondary data, and identifying a need after talking with or learning about the work of an external expert (Figure 7).

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### 7. Methods used by winners to identify a need

	2013	2014	Total (N=18)
Informally identifying need	7	8	15
Formally identifying need (with data)	7	5	12
Consulting with an external expert	2	1	3

#### *Informally identifying need*

We use the word “informal” to describe the most common way in which winners identified a need in their community (15 winners). Informal identification of need refers to winners being actively and genuinely involved and engaged with their community; as a result of this involvement, a community’s need becomes readily apparent to winners. In other words, through their connection with their community, winners informally knew their community’s needs without asking. A Four Bands stakeholder said, “[Four Bands leader] is embedded in their community. They have a real sense of what their community needs.” For example, Juxtaposition Arts’ physical location is at one of the busiest intersections in its community, which gives them insight into the needs of their community:

*When you look across the street, you see that there’s a bus stop that is heavily used and there’s no seating and no lights. That’s a safety need, a convenience need, and an aesthetic need. – Juxtaposition Arts leader*

#### *Formally identify need (with data)*

Seven winners collected primary data through surveys, public forums, or focus groups to identify a need, and seven winners accessed secondary data sources, such as the U.S. Census Bureau, to identify a community need. For example, Behavior Management Systems conducted two community-wide surveys that identified mental health services as a critical community need, and Anu learned through secondary data sources that less than half of foster care youth were successfully placed in permanent living situations. Two winners used both primary and secondary data when identifying a need.

### *Consulting with an external expert*

Additionally, three winners identified a community need with the help of an external expert, either by reading or hearing about their work or by talking to them directly. “External” in this instance means an expert that is not a part of the community within which an innovation occurred. For instance, Northern Plains Sustainable Agriculture Society said, “We identified the need when Raoul Robinson [a plant scientist with globally recognized expertise in crop improvement and breeding for durable resistance] came to our annual winter conference. Then we were able to come together as a group of farmers concerned about the need [for seed variety].”

### *Using multiple methods to identify need*

Twelve winners used multiple methods to identify a need. For example, while Juxtaposition Arts’ geographic location offers them insight into the needs of their community, they also accessed secondary data to identify and learn more about their community’s needs.

## **Increase collective understanding of the issue**

Bush Prize winners found multiple ways to increase collective understanding of an issue, including learning from their community, educating their community, and learning from external experts (Figure 8).

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### **8. Methods used by winners to increase collective understanding**

	<b>2013</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>Total (N=18)</b>
Learning from community	8	7	15
Educating the community	7	6	13
Learning from external experts	3	2	5

### *Learning from community*

Fifteen winners increased collective understanding by learning *from* stakeholders and community members. This method positions the winner as “learner” and stakeholders or community members as “educator.” A Community Violence Intervention Center leader commented, “We had over 130 people involved in planning; we wanted to hear what they had to say.” Common examples of learning from community included having one-on-one conversations with community members, hosting community conversations, and surveying or canvassing community members.

## ***Educating the community***

Thirteen winners offered their knowledge *to* stakeholders and community members, positioning the winner as “educator” and community members as “learner.” Similar to learning from community, efforts to educate the community also included one-on-one conversations or larger community gatherings. Often these conversations and gatherings included an exchange of information (that is, learning from *and* educating community members), rather than a solely one-way flow of information.

A common theme from interviews was educating community members about a new way of perceiving of an issue, which includes correcting misperceptions of a need or addressing perceptions that were counterproductive to a winner’s work. For instance, Juxtaposition Arts leaders want “to change minds about the ability and potential of youth, particularly youth of color, to contribute to solving tough problems.” A Face It TOGETHER Sioux Falls leader and a Great Plains Food Bank stakeholder also mentioned the importance of changing peoples’ perceptions for their work:

*If you look back in the history of [drug and alcohol addiction] treatment, back to the old days of, ‘It’s a moral issue, pray it away.’ That’s gotta go. This has to be treated like the chronic disease it is, and [we have] to get people to understand that.*

*– Face It TOGETHER Sioux Falls leader*

*There’s a social barrier in asking for help... It makes [local food banks] work challenging in that some people who live in this area believe that needing to use a food pantry is a personal defect or a lack of moral character. – Great Plains Food Bank stakeholder*

## ***Learning from external experts***

Five winners looked for expertise from outside their community by contacting external experts or other organizations that have engaged in similar work, or simply by reading the work of external experts. For instance, Cloquet Area Fire District researched similar fire protection delivery models when they were developing their own, with a Cloquet Area Fire District stakeholder saying, “The CAFD’s organization structure was based on models that we found from all over the country.”

## ***Using multiple methods to increase collective understanding***

It should be noted that, similar to the “identify need” phase, 15 winners used multiple methods to increase collective understanding of the issue. As was previously reported, learning was often exchanged with community members; winners were both learning and educating in the same instance. As a specific example of using multiple methods, First Peoples Fund spoke directly with Native artists about their perspectives as artists, educated their community regarding the importance of the arts economy, and learned

from external experts regarding the delivery of individual financial and professional support (specifically, FPF convened a group of financial experts in the beginning stages of pursuing their innovation).

## Generate ideas

Bush Prize winners mentioned a number of ways in which they generated ideas, including internally generating ideas (within their organization or with their partners within a collaborative or project team), with community members, and externally generating ideas (by consulting with external experts or studying external models) (Figure 9).

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### 9. Methods used by winners to generate ideas

	2013	2014	Total (N=18)
Internally/With partners	6	8	14
With community members	6	7	13
Externally generating ideas	3	3	6

#### *Internally generating ideas*

We use “internally” to mean internally within one organization as well as internally within a partnership or collaborative; 14 winners mentioned internally generating ideas when asked about this phase of their community innovation process. Winners noted ongoing and regular brainstorming conversations with staff or partners, suggesting that generating ideas was a normal part of their work and relationships. Additionally, winners spoke of generating ideas with varying levels of formality, such as having impromptu conversations when challenges or opportunities arose, or regularly scheduling meetings in order to talk about progress and ideas for moving forward.

#### *With community members*

Thirteen winners engaged their constituents in generating ideas, with a Northern Plains Sustainable Agriculture Society leader saying, “[Farmers are] certainly involved in generating ideas.” Similar to internally generating ideas, winners engaged community members in brainstorming with varying levels of formality, sometimes hosting formal community events to generate ideas and sometimes informally talking with community members on the street or elsewhere in their community.



### *Externally generating ideas*

When generating ideas, six winners sought the opinions of external experts (either by contacting them directly or by reading publications of theirs) or looked at external models, with a few winners basing their community innovations on models that were successfully implemented elsewhere. For example, Behavior Management Systems implemented a mental health crisis care model that was successful in Texas.

### *Using multiple methods to generate ideas*

Similar to identifying need and increasing collective understanding, 11 winners used more than one method of generating ideas. For instance, Destination Rapid City gathered input from their community and consulted with an expert regarding economic development when generating ideas of how to achieve their innovation.

## **Test and implement solutions**

Bush Prize winners used a number of methods to test and implement their solutions, including tracking their activities (outputs), planning for evaluation, and evaluating their innovation (Figure 10).

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### **10. Methods used by winners to test and implement solutions**

	<b>2013</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>Total (N=18)</b>
Tracking activities (outputs)	9	9	18
Planning for evaluation	2	1	3
Evaluating the innovation	1	2	3

### *Tracking activities (outputs)*

All winners tracked the activities associated with their innovation (often called “outputs”) when testing and implementing it. For some innovations, tracking activities was a means by which organizations could see the effectiveness of their work. For instance, Anu Family Services developed and implemented more intensive procedures to find permanent families for youth (these procedures are more intensive when compared with typical family finding practices of most child welfare agencies). Purely by providing this service – and tracking the number of youth placed in permanent homes – Anu Family Services can compare their permanent placement rates to permanent placement rates achieved by foster care agencies nationwide. Additionally, Legal Services of North Dakota works to provide tax assistance and financial literacy training on reservations in the state. They measure the

impact of their work by tracking the tax returns that are filed through their organization. By looking at these tax returns, they can measure this component of their impact in specific dollar figures.

### ***Planning for evaluation and evaluating the innovation***

Three winners planned for an eventual evaluation by developing frameworks or logic models that will guide them as they pursue a formal evaluation. Additionally, three winners took the initiative to rigorously evaluate their innovations. This was not always possible for winners, since some of their innovations' ultimate impact is longer-term. For instance, Community Violence Intervention Center's innovation educates youth about healthy relationships in an effort to reduce community violence in Grand Forks County, North Dakota. An evaluation of the community-wide impact of an innovation like this would not be conclusive until many years after the innovation was fully implemented.

# Pillars of community innovation

As reflected in the Community Innovation Process diagram, the Bush Foundation Community Innovation program supports an approach to problem solving that is inclusive, collaborative, and resourceful at every phase of the problem-solving process. This approach is exemplified by Bush Prize winners. Some specific examples of Bush Prize winners exhibiting these pillars are offered in this section of the review.

## Inclusive

**Bush Foundation's definition of inclusive:** Meaningfully engage key stakeholders – thoughtfully identifying those needed to create the intended change and, whenever possible, including those directly affected by the problem

### *Ways of engaging stakeholders*

Meaningfully engaging key stakeholders can happen in a number of different ways. After interviewing Bush Prize winners and stakeholders, we identified four common ways in which winners engaged their constituents, including:

- **Surveying or canvassing their constituents** – engaging constituents individually, either through talking with constituents face-to-face or through paper or online surveys (14 Bush Prize winners utilized this engagement method)
- **Hosting community conversations or focus groups** – engaging constituents in a group setting, ranging from large open-invitation meetings in which community members have the opportunity to take part in learning about and directing a community innovation process, to smaller group gatherings in which there is guided conversation among community members (13 Bush Prize winners utilized this engagement method)
- **Directly involving community members on work groups** – formally appointing community members who are not professionally affiliated with the winner organization or partners to decision-making roles within a community innovation process (11 Bush Prize winners utilized this engagement method)
- **Intentionally reaching out to those usually not heard from in their community** – identifying those who are not usually heard from in a community and deliberately attempting to engage them in the community innovation process (11 Bush Prize winners utilized this engagement method)

## *Ensuring meaningful engagement*

Surveying, hosting focus groups, or the use of other engagement methods do not inherently make for meaningful engagement. Rather, it is when engagement methods are paired with inclusive organizational values that engagement becomes meaningful. For instance, if an organization hosts a town hall meeting but does not share ownership of their work with their constituents, this engagement effort will not result in meaningful engagement.

The following subsections (“Meeting stakeholders where they’re at” and “Reconciling a variety of perspectives”) represent two ways that meaningful community engagement often occurred for Bush Prize winners. Each winner performed these aspects of meaningful engagement in ways that made sense for their organization and community.

### **Meeting stakeholders where they are at**

In order to most effectively engage stakeholders, it is important to understand stakeholders’ day-to-day work and perspectives regarding changes or additions to their work. For example, Community Violence Intervention Center learned from teachers how to best integrate new curriculum with their day-to-day activities, saying, “We asked [teachers], ‘How do we build our work into what you are doing already?’” Likewise, Anu Family Services uses technology to deliver training to foster care parents in ways and at times that are convenient for them.

*I said, ‘I want you to remember when you first had a baby, when taking a shower was an act of Congress and as soon as you got in the shower the baby started crying and you were power showering to just get to the baby and you are freaking out. That’s how our foster parents feel all the time. If I told you at that time in your life that I need you to do 30 hours of training, you would’ve told me it was impossible – so we have to make it possible.’ – Anu Family Services leader*

Additionally, Juxtaposition Arts literally met their constituents where they are at by talking with individual community members at the corner bus stop about city planning decisions that may affect their neighborhood, saying, “We say [to our constituents], ‘We’re here on the corner playing dominoes with you because we want to figure out how we can make this corner and this corridor better. What do you think?’”

These efforts by Community Violence Intervention Center, Anu Family Services, and Juxtaposition Arts are examples of making an effort to meet stakeholders where they are at and as seamlessly as possible integrate their innovations into their day-to-day lives. Such efforts result in a more meaningful innovation and more effective implementation of an innovation.

## Reconciling a variety of perspectives

A sign of an effective community innovation process is hearing a wide variety of perspectives. Moving forward with a community innovation process entails sorting through this variety of perspectives and arriving at a decision that accounts for each of them. This process of working through sometimes conflicting perspectives or opinions contributes to a community innovation that is meaningful for the community-at-large, rather than individuals or subsets within a community. For example, Cannon River Watershed Partnership stated that differing perspectives are necessary for a valid community innovation process. Likewise, Legal Services of North Dakota shared the importance of considering a variety of opinions before making a decision:

*[Legal Services of North Dakota leader] listened to every side of what was going on, and after he had listened to everything, he made a decision.*  
– Legal Services of North Dakota stakeholder

## Collaborative

**Bush Foundation’s definition of collaborative:** A true joint effort, with partners willing to share ownership and decision-making as they pursue an innovation together

### *Types of partners with which winners collaborated*

Bush Prize winners collaborated with many types of partners, including government agencies, nonprofits, businesses, K-12 school systems, higher education institutions, medical or health care institutions, religious institutions, and foundations. See Figure 11 on the next page for the number of winners that collaborated with various partner types. It should be noted that we defined “partners” as those actively involved in the community innovation process or those that provided some necessary skill, resource, or connection in order to achieve the innovation.

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## 11. Partner types involved in winners' community innovation processes

	2013	2014	Total (N=18)
Government agencies	9	7	16
Nonprofit organizations	7	5	12
Businesses	3	6	9
K-12 school systems	3	2	5
Higher education institutions	4	1	5
Medical or health care institutions	3	2	5
Religious institutions	1	1	2
Foundations <sup>1</sup>	1	--	1

**Note:** Neither 2013 nor 2014 interview protocols asked systematically about partner types because the “Collaborative” pillar was not operationalized at the time of protocol development to include partner types. Findings presented in Figure 11 represent partner types mentioned by winners when asked about partners involved in their innovation process, rather than a specific question about partner types.

<sup>1</sup> While foundations were involved with a number of winners' innovations by providing funding, we only counted foundations as “partners” if they held a more involved role, such as helping to facilitate meetings or leading components of the innovation process.

### *Managing different types of partnerships*

Winners managed partnerships and collaboratives differently depending on their size. Some innovations were achieved by large collaboratives (10+ organizations or agencies), while other innovations were achieved by smaller partnerships (2-9 organizations or agencies). For work involving many partners, effective facilitation and coordination is necessary for successful collaboration. A dedicated facilitator and coordinator can expedite planning and decision-making processes, as well as contribute to realizing action steps more efficiently.

*[Our project] coordinator spent hours mapping exactly how [our process] would work. What data would be collected by who, when it needed to be in by. She is a master at tracking it all. She or one of her staff was at all of those different meetings; there was always a link in communication. – Community Violence Intervention Center leader*

For smaller partnerships, winners placed additional importance on the relational aspects of partnerships, whereas this was less of a focus in interviews with winners who accomplished their innovations within larger collaboratives. For instance, Juxtaposition Arts accomplished their innovation with a smaller number of partners, and their leaders described a process of short-term, contract-based partnerships in order to determine if the relationship would support a successful partnership.

## *Benefitting from collaboration*

Many Bush Prize winners noted the benefits of collaborating with partners, specifically saying that collaboration widens the idea and resource pool for achieving a community innovation. Project PRIME spoke about how, through collaboration with different kinds of institutions, they were able to build credibility and momentum within their community. In this way, collaboration made it easier for the project to gain community buy-in and to seek and utilize more resources. A Community of Care stakeholder acknowledged “a variety of players who at one time or another contributed something significant [to the innovation],” with other winners echoing this sentiment:

*It was a dynamic group with a passion to help us develop. You had to bring the right people together—that’s the secret. – Behavior Management Systems stakeholder*

*We have a wonderful relationship with our law enforcement [agencies in the area], if we didn’t have that, it’d be a whole different situation. – Domestic Violence Crisis Center leader*

Government partnerships were not only beneficial, but often necessary, with a Destination Rapid Center leader saying, “We had to get the mayor and council on board because we built on public land, it’s owned by the city.”

## Resourceful

**Bush Foundation’s definition of resourceful:** Using existing resources and assets creatively to make the most of what a community already has

## *Sharing resources*

All winners mentioned sharing resources with their partners, which is one way that winners exhibited resourcefulness. By sharing resources, winners were able to maximize the reach of their work as well as increase their work’s sustainability. Behavior Management Systems offered an example of five mental health providers sharing the staffing and financial responsibility of providing follow-up services to patients experiencing mental health crisis. Likewise, Lanesboro Arts mentioned a strategic decision to share resources among partners:

*The Arts Council had no staff but had a building, and Cornucopia had no building but had a staff. It was aligning the pluses and minuses of both organizations. It was strategic in making it more sustainable for both. – Lanesboro Arts leader*

## *Types of resources used by winners*

Bush Prize winners used a number of different resources when pursuing their innovations. Wilder Research categorized resource groups into five categories: people, groups, or individuals; political resources; cultural resources; constructed or capital assets; and natural resources. Please see Figure 12.

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### 12. Resource types used by winners

	2013	2014	Total (N=18)
<b>People, groups, or individuals</b> , such as those who brought specific knowledge, social connections, skills, or perspective to the process	8	9	17
<b>Political resources</b> , such as existing laws, regulations, or political processes	6	4	10
<b>Cultural resources</b> , such as social dynamics like demographics, social movements, or cultural practices	1	6	7
<b>Constructed or capital assets</b> , such as existing infrastructure, buildings or space, or technology	1	5	6
<b>Natural resources</b> , such as land, water, wildlife, or forests	2	3	5

#### **People, groups, and individuals**

Seventeen winners mentioned people, groups, and individuals as resources for achieving their innovation. Sometimes winners worked with a specific group of people when pursuing their innovation. For instance, Northern Plains Sustainable Agriculture Society leverages the skills of farmers when applying for seed breeding grants, which benefits their organization (because it strengthens their grant applications) and the farmer community (because farmers are paid for the time and resources allocated to seed breeding).

*The real experts at increasing seed variety are in the farmer community. [Writing farmers into grant applications] is where Northern Plains has broken the mold, and it's resulting in success. It's an excellent example of thinking outside the box. – Northern Plains Sustainable Agriculture Society stakeholder*

Another way that winners talked about community members assisting with the innovation process was as “local champions,” or a community member or leader with the clout necessary to garner buy-in from other community members. A Lanesboro Arts leader as well as stakeholders mentioned a “matriarch” of the community, saying that “having someone from the community who has been there their whole life to support the work is exceptionally important.” Likewise, a Face It TOGETHER Sioux Falls leader mentioned two “seasoned business people who had a lot of connections,” saying, “There was definitely a recognition of ‘If these two are involved, we should check it out.’”



Additionally, winners also spoke of garnering the support of elected officials as another way in which people assisted the community innovation process. “That’s always been really key, to have that elected person from the area,” said a Cannon River Watershed Partnership leader.

### Political resources

Ten winners used political resources when achieving their innovations, such as legislation that helped them achieve their innovation (for example, the Clean Water Act for Cannon River Watershed Partnership’s innovation), or contracting with government agencies to provide a service or otherwise receiving government funds that in some way was connected to their innovation (Figure 13).

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### 13. Type of government funding received by winners

	2013	2014	Total (N=18)
Local funding	8	4	12
State funding	3	3	6
Federal funding	4	2	6

**Note:** Neither 2013 nor 2014 interview protocols asked systematically about type of government funding because “political resources” was not operationalized at the time of protocol development to include type of government funding. As such, the findings presented in this table represent times that winners mentioned type of government funding without a specific prompt about government funding or type of government funding received.

For two winners (Cloquet Area Fire District and Lanesboro Arts), their innovation was a political act. As a Lanesboro Arts stakeholder described, their innovation occurred “once the mayor and the city council designated the city as the Arts Campus.” According to these winners, a benefit of “enacting” their innovation in this manner is ongoing and institutionalized support from government systems.

### Cultural resources

Seven Bush Prize winners leveraged cultural resources when pursuing their innovation, such as social shifts or movements, or cultural values. One Cannon River Watershed Partnership stakeholder commented, “The culture in a very small community is exactly why their approach worked,” with other winners echoing that their knowledge of their communities’ cultures was paramount for achieving their innovation.

*They leveraged religious leadership and how they could help lift up the importance and viability of this new organization. They called on people like that to advertise and legitimize what we offered. [That] brought legitimacy to our new organization.*  
 – Community of Care stakeholder

Leveraging demographic or economic shifts in their communities – and the community perceptions that arose from these shifts – was another way in which winners used cultural resources when pursuing their innovation. It should be noted, however, that while winners leveraged these shifts, these external influences sometimes acted as the impetus *for* the innovation as well, with a Lanesboro Arts leader saying, “There was important synergy with the economic downturn in 2008. There was a lot of questioning of, ‘What will this community be?’”

Another way in which winners conceptualized “cultural resources” was in terms of acknowledging cultural values that they share with their community. In particular, Native American Community Development Institute and First Peoples Fund – both Native American-led organizations focused on serving the Native American community – talked about cultural resources in this way, with a Native American Community Development Institute leader saying, “We broke bread with people a lot. We practiced some of our spirituality, formally and informally.”

### **Constructed or capital assets**

Constructed or capital assets that belonged to Bush Prize winners, or were present in their community, were another important resource for achieving a community innovation, with six winners noting that they utilized such assets. Juxtaposition Arts and other arts-focused winners offered numerous examples of capitalizing on underutilized physical aspects of their communities to promote community identity and gathering. For example, to encourage interaction with their physical surroundings, Juxtaposition Arts created a small “pocket park” next to their building that features sculpture art created by youth enrolled in classes at Juxtaposition Arts, and they periodically erect a “parklet” (roughly the size of a street parking spot) on their street. Similarly, Lanesboro Arts created their Poetry Parking Lot to encourage travel to their downtown area and to address concerns of community members related to accommodating tourist vehicles.

Community gathering places also provided winners space to engage with their community members when pursuing their community innovation. For instance, Native American Community Development Institute used local businesses and institutions to meet with members of their community.

### **Natural resources**

Natural resources also played a role in some winners’ community innovation processes, with five winners saying that they used this resource type for their innovation. A Lanesboro Arts leader billed the Arts Campus as “a multi-pronged approach to promoting the community: Lanesboro Arts promotes the arts community, and the Chamber of

Commerce promotes the scenery and recreation.” Additionally, the innovations achieved by Northern Plains Sustainable Agriculture Society and Cannon River Watershed Partnership rely on preserving or supporting natural resources. In this way, these winners used natural resources in a creative way to achieve their innovations.

# How is community innovation a different kind of innovation?

From our interviews with Bush Prize winners and stakeholders, and our review of innovation literature, it is clear that community innovation occupies a distinct space within the innovation field. Community innovation is distinct from other types of innovation because it relies on and takes place within community.

## Sharing ownership and committing to community are distinctive characteristics of community innovation

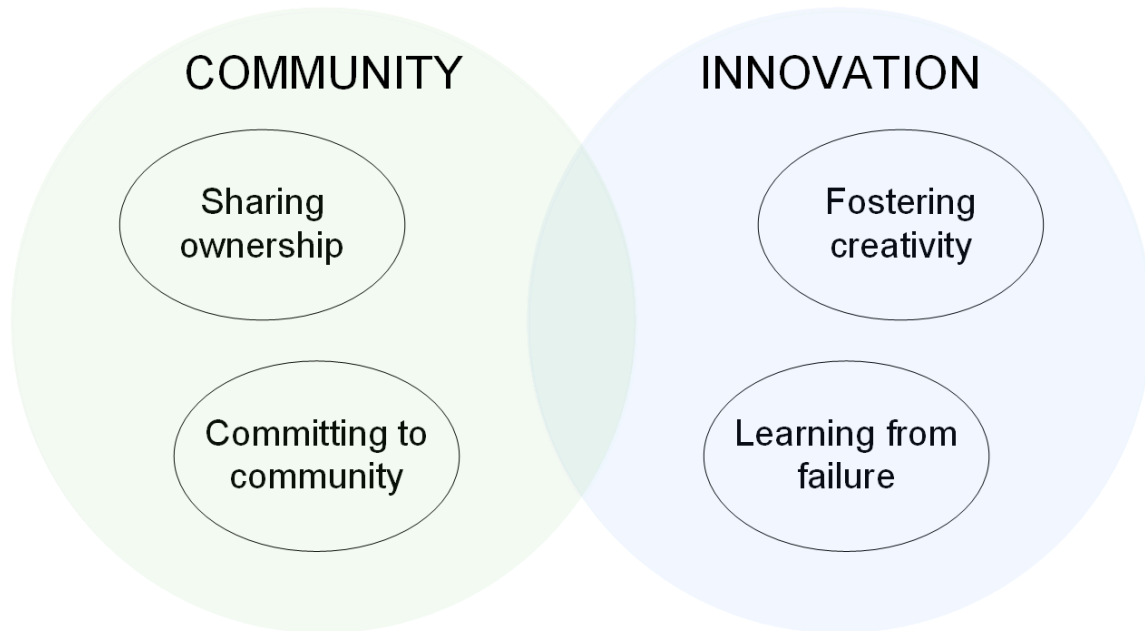
Of the four characteristics of a culture of innovation that were identified during interviews with Bush Prize winners and stakeholders (sharing ownership, fostering creativity, learning from failure, and committing to community), two are related more directly to “community” and two are related more directly to “innovation.” The characteristics related more directly to community are: sharing ownership and committing to community, while the other two characteristics – fostering creativity and learning from failure – are related more directly to innovation. In this way, the characteristics of a culture of innovation can be separated into “community characteristics” and “innovation characteristics.” While the “innovation characteristics” are important for innovation, *community* innovation only occurs when the process toward innovation is grounded in these “community characteristics” of sharing ownership and committing to community.

It should be noted, however, that the presence of all four culture of innovation characteristics are important for community innovation. The “community characteristics” are the foundation, but an innovation will not occur if the “innovation characteristics” are not also present. For example, an organization can share ownership and commit to their community, and never venture into innovative endeavors. Community innovation occurs at the overlap of “community characteristics” and “innovation characteristics.” See Figure 14 on the next page for a visualization of these concepts.

To reflect these findings, Wilder Research recommends that the Bush Foundation adopt the term “Culture of Community Innovation” to replace its current use of “Culture of Innovation.”

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## 14. Characteristics of a culture of community innovation



### Community innovation relies on the process by which it was achieved

To achieve a community innovation, the pillars of the Community Innovation Process (Inclusive, Collaborative, and Resourceful) act in parallel with the “community characteristics” of sharing ownership and committing to community. The success of a community innovation process is judged by whether the resulting solution is more effective, equitable, or sustainable *as well as* whether it is meaningful for the community within which it occurs. In other words, a successful community innovation occurs when community members are deeply involved in defining what “more effective, equitable, or sustainable” means for them and their community.

For example, in order to build collective understanding or generate ideas about how to solve a community problem, an organization might engage its constituents to brainstorm potential solutions (which would be an example of enacting the “Inclusive” pillar). However, if those leading the engagement effort are not committed to their community and decide to pursue an idea that does not have community support, any solution arising from this process will not be *of* the community, and therefore will not be a successful community innovation (according to our definition).

The same could be said about an organization that chooses to involve multiple partners in a community innovation process (which would be an example of enacting the “Collaborative” pillar). If those leading the innovation process do not approach partnerships by sharing

ownership with their partners (through listening, building relationships, and recognizing expertise), any solution that results from those processes is not an example of successful community innovation by our definition because it is not the result of multiple and varied perspectives.

Regarding the “Resourceful” pillar, using resources is different in a successful community innovation process because sharing ownership and committing to community often entails more time-consuming processes, which increases costs. It follows that extra-monetary resources (such as political, cultural, constructed, or natural resources) are beneficial and sometimes necessary to achieve community innovations. In other words, within a community innovation process, “resourceful” takes a distinctly less-monetary hue, with a greater emphasis on using other types of resources.

Additionally, by sharing ownership of a community innovation process, the pool of potential resources that can be used toward achieving a community innovation expands in quantity and in type (because the people involved likewise expands in quantity and in type). Sharing ownership is also helpful in assessing a community’s assets; if an organization shares ownership with community members, the number and variety of people involved in creating a solution allows for a more thorough assessment of their community’s assets and strengths. As a result, a community innovation process can be grounded in these assets and strengths, making for a more effective and meaningful solution.

### **Community innovators ensure that every aspect of their work is deeply relevant to their community**

The most important finding from this review is that successful community innovators have discovered ways of ensuring deep relevance with their communities. This relevance is an utmost priority for them and their work; it is embedded in how they think, how they approach their work, and how they measure success. Because community relevance is so important to them – and because they see the value inherent in this relevance – community innovators take extra, time-intensive steps to meaningfully engage their community. Bolstered by sharing ownership (through listening, building relationships, and recognizing expertise) and by committing to their community (through developing shared vision with community members and representing their community), community innovators tackle tough community problems by ensuring that each phase of the problem-solving process is deeply relevant to their community.

# Appendix

## *Bush Prize winner descriptions*

A brief description of Wilder Research’s understanding of the Bush Prize winners and their community innovations follows. The Bush Foundation recognizes these organizations for their pattern of innovative solutions; pattern of using inclusive, collaborative and resourceful problem-solving processes; and for their culture of innovation. The descriptions of innovations and their impacts in this section restate information from winner applications or interviews. It is important to note that Wilder Research did not evaluate winners’ outcomes, and while some winners conducted their own evaluations, Wilder Research did not conduct rigorous reviews of these evaluations.

## **2013 winners**

**Anu Family Services.** Based in Saint Paul, Minnesota, is a nonprofit child welfare agency. Anu Family Services developed an exhaustive search process to find foster youth permanent homes (as opposed to “diligent” search processes used by most child welfare agencies). Additionally, Anu Family Services helps youth heal from trauma caused by the foster care system by expanding their network of supportive adults, and trains welfare professionals to deliver services in ways that support their own well-being. Anu Family Services is distinct from other child welfare agencies in its focus on the holistic well-being of youth and child welfare professionals.

**Behavior Management Systems.** Behavior Management Systems is a mental health service provider in Rapid City, South Dakota. Behavior Management Systems led a process that resulted in more appropriate treatment of people in mental health crisis. This new model changed how law enforcement professionals in Rapid City responded to people in mental health crisis; instead of transporting those in crisis to the emergency room – which often resulted in expensive and sometimes unnecessary inpatient treatment – they now mitigate these crises in partnership with the Behavior Management Systems Crisis Care Center. The Crisis Care Center provides 24-hour crisis care for adults in mental health crisis or in need of substance abuse stabilization, which represents an alternative, and often more appropriate, care approach to mental health crisis.

**Cloquet Area Fire District.** Cloquet Area Fire District cooperatively delivers fire protection and emergency medical services across four municipalities (Cloquet, Perch Lake, Fond du Lac reservation, and Scanlon) in northeast Carlton County, Minnesota, rather than each municipality providing its own services. In order to deliver services in this way, the Cloquet Area Fire District helped to change legislation in Minnesota to allow the creation

of a new fire district that follows a unique taxing structure in order to deliver services across jurisdictions.

**Community Violence Intervention Center.** Community Violence Intervention Center is a community violence intervention and prevention agency in Grand Forks, North Dakota. Community Violence Intervention Center developed and implemented a program called Safer Tomorrows, which institutionalized violence prevention and healthy relationship education for K-12 students and for youth athletes in Grand Forks County. With the goal of consistently identifying instances of domestic violence, Community Violence Intervention Center also developed new procedures for police when responding to distress calls, such as instructing police officers to ask about perceptions of safety upon arrival.

**Four Bands Community Fund.** Four Bands Community Fund is a community development financial institution located on the Cheyenne River Sioux Indian Reservation. Four Bands Community Fund developed and implemented Making Waves, an initiative to educate youth in tribal schools about financial management and entrepreneurship skills. Making Waves' goal is to instill sound financial practices early in life to reduce financial stress as students grow up. This is the first time that youth financial management and entrepreneurship training has been offered on the reservation. A tribal resolution was passed to support the Making Waves initiative by encouraging tribal departments and enterprises, community organizations, schools, and local businesses to collaborate to remove barriers to financial capability and entrepreneurship. The Making Waves curriculum is now available nationwide.

**Great Plains Food Bank.** Based in Fargo, North Dakota, Great Plains Food Bank is a statewide food access and advocacy organization. Great Plains Food Bank led the first-ever study of the charitable food network in North Dakota and used the results to “change the hunger-relief business” in the state. Great Plains Food Bank used the study as a catalyst to launch creative and collaborative new programs, and now acts as a hub of resources and knowledge for addressing food insecurity in pursuit of a comprehensive and coordinated hunger-relief system throughout the state.

**Juxtaposition Arts.** Juxtaposition Arts is a youth-focused community development and social enterprise arts organization based in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Juxtaposition Arts approaches community development from an asset-based and community-informed framework that actively seeks the input of community members traditionally left out of decision-making processes. Their approach is exemplified by a partnership with the University of Minnesota Department of Landscape Architecture called “ReMix: Creating Places for People on West Broadway” that educates youth, provides arts training, and connects community members to city officials.



**Northern Plains Sustainable Agriculture Society.** Based in La Moure, North Dakota, Northern Plains Sustainable Agriculture Society is a grassroots sustainable agriculture education and advocacy organization. Northern Plains Sustainable Agriculture Society created a Farm Breeding Club, which facilitates partnerships between farmers and agronomists to increase the variety of organic and low-output seeds across seven plains states. Northern Plains uses participatory plant breeding to increase the variety of organic seeds in North Dakota and the region through close collaboration among farmers and agronomists during all phases of breeding.

**Project PRIME.** Based in Rapid City, South Dakota, Project PRIME is a math-focused education collaborative, utilizing a partnership between a school district, a university, and a nonprofit organization. Project PRIME implemented a new math curriculum and pedagogy in Rapid City Area Schools (the K-12 public school district), and works to train current and future Rapid City K-12 math teachers at Black Hills State University with the new curriculum and pedagogy. This new approach to the development and implementation of math curriculum resulted in improved math achievement for Rapid City students, as well as a decreased achievement gap between Native American students and white students.

## 2014 winners

**Cannon River Watershed Partnership.** Based in Northfield, Minnesota, Cannon River Watershed Partnership is an environmental protection organization formed by citizens dedicated to protecting the Cannon River. Cannon River Watershed Partnership leads the Southeast Minnesota Wastewater Initiative, which engages communities in need of making improvements to their sewage treatment systems in the 11 counties in Southeast Minnesota. The Southeast Minnesota Wastewater Initiative is a replicable model that improves sewage treatment through the assembly of task forces that design solutions tailored to a community's needs. With Cannon River Watershed Partnership's assistance, through the Wastewater Initiative, 21 communities over the past 12 years have upgraded their sewer systems, improving the water quality and natural systems of the watersheds in Southeast Minnesota.

**Community of Care.** Community of Care, based in Arthur, North Dakota, serves older adults in rural Cass County, North Dakota. Community of Care empowers people to "age in place" by providing support to older adults, intended to allow them to live at home and remain attached to their communities as long as safely possible. Through their One Stop Resource Center, Community of Care provides older adults with information, referrals, transportation, and services with a focus on reducing feelings of isolation and improving the quality of life. Community of Care's model of keeping residents in their homes is a more cost-effective option than moving to assisted living or long-term care facilities.

**Destination Rapid City.** Based in Rapid City, South Dakota, Destination Rapid City is a nonprofit business league that serves and promotes Downtown Rapid City. Destination Rapid City built Main Street Square, a public gathering space, to help revitalize Downtown Rapid City. The space intends to draw the community together, appeal to visitors, and allow downtown businesses to thrive. The square was created to provide the space and infrastructure to facilitate frequent, free, and family-oriented activities, cultural events, and festivals, all sponsored by Destination Rapid City.

**Domestic Violence Crisis Center.** Based in Minot, North Dakota, Domestic Violence Crisis Center is the only domestic violence intervention organization in a 100-mile radius. Domestic Violence Crisis Center developed a campus-style shelter where victims of domestic abuse have centralized access to housing, supportive services, and resources. As early adopters to this new format of service provision, Domestic Violence Crisis Center provides safer and streamlined services to survivors, and can now serve triple the number of survivors it could before the campus's creation.

**Face It TOGETHER Sioux Falls.** Face It TOGETHER Sioux Falls is an addiction management organization, focused on changing the way the Sioux Falls community approaches addiction. Face It TOGETHER Sioux Falls created a new model to provide holistic, peer-to-peer support services to those seeking addiction care as opposed to a short-term clinical approach, and provides that support at all stages in the recovery process. This was developed in collaboration with the community, and a variety of sectors in Sioux Falls now work to support the organization and those receiving services from it financially and otherwise.

**First Peoples Fund.** Based in Rapid City, South Dakota, First Peoples Fund is a community development and culture preservation organization. First Peoples Fund provides financial and technical support for Native American artists through fellowships to entrepreneurial artists and artists focused on cultural preservation. Entrepreneurial artists receive a three-step training program to build their skills and knowledge of business practices, and First Peoples Fund works to facilitate connections between artists, giving them a network from which they can continuously learn from one another.

**Lanesboro Arts.** Based in Lanesboro, Minnesota, Lanesboro Arts is a community development arts organization. Lanesboro Arts facilitated the designation of their entire town as an arts campus, entailing the transformation of infrastructure and underused public space into artful gathering places. Since being declared an arts campus, Lanesboro has seen increased economic development and tourism, as well as increased partnerships between arts, community organizations, and city planners, resulting in the integration of arts engagement programs into the daily lives of residents and visitors.

**Legal Services of North Dakota.** Legal Services of North Dakota, based in Bismarck, North Dakota, is a state-wide civil legal services organization. Legal Services of North Dakota developed a multi-pronged service intake approach that includes online and phone applications, direct outreach into Native American communities, and networking with other entities in the legal system. This new system provides a more streamlined system, which cuts down on staff hours needed for intake and allows staff to dedicate those hours to providing legal services for their clients.

**Native American Community Development Institute.** Based in Minneapolis, Minnesota, Native American Community Development Institute is a Native American community development intermediary organization. Native American Community Development Institute conducted three years of community research to create a community blueprint, detailing a shared vision for the community's needs and wishes. From that grew the American Indian Cultural Corridor, a half-mile stretch of streets in Minneapolis centered on Native American art and businesses.