The Boston Foundation

There for the Future
What exactly does a community foundation do?
At the Boston Foundation, we are most proud of the many times the Foundation has provided early support for the fresh ideas and promising organizations that are destined to shape the future of our community. We call this kind of support “seed capital for dreams.” We invite you to page through this booklet.
Its stories and photographs are a testament to the indelible power of those dreams—fulfilled in a great city.
Introduction

Between 1960 and 1980, through a series of grants, the Boston Foundation supported the historic merger of four medical institutions to create Brigham and Women’s Hospital—in the process helping to make Longwood Medical Area a medical mecca for the region and the world. Today, Brigham and Women’s ranks among the top hospitals in the nation.

Being ‘there at the beginning’ for Brigham and Women’s Hospital was only one of the numerous investments the Boston Foundation made to strengthen Greater Boston in the final decades of the 20th century.

This is the third in a series of publications about the impact the Foundation and its donors have had on this community. It focuses on the years between 1980 and 2005, when prescient and timely investments helped to encourage astonishingly fresh ideas and launch groundbreaking nonprofit organizations.

The Boston Foundation is deeply committed to continuing its tradition of investment in innovation by searching for tomorrow’s great ideas and ventures—and supporting those organizations, movements and initiatives that will be ‘there for the future’ of Greater Boston.
Rarely is the word ‘seminar’ seen next to the word ‘action’, but that is exactly what the Carol R. Goldberg Seminars have resulted in, every time. The Seminars bring local leaders together to explore some of Greater Boston’s most pressing issues and create action agendas for change. Topics have ranged from health care to child care to the vitality of the nonprofit sector as a whole. One of the most successful seminars resulted in a nationally-recognized blueprint for open space that led to a dramatic turnaround of Boston’s parks. The most recent seminar, in 2005, released a groundbreaking report on the role and impact of higher education institutions in Greater Boston.

The Boston Foundation has served as a home for the Seminars since its origins in 1982—providing more than $600,000 in grant support over the years and working with Boston Foundation donor Carol Goldberg and Tufts University’s College of Citizenship and Public Service to shape the meetings and the agendas.

The most recent seminar focused on the impact of higher education on Greater Boston.

Carol R. Goldberg Seminars

Carol R. Goldberg
In 1982, the community development movement in the Commonwealth was strengthened considerably when the Massachusetts Association of Community Development Corporations (MACDC) was created with two grants totaling $30,000 from the Boston Foundation. It was the nation’s first statewide association of community development organizations, and set the stage for similar efforts across the country.

MACDC and its members are dedicated to advancing community-based efforts to develop affordable housing, promote economic justice, encourage social change and help low and moderate income people obtain the power to impact the future of their communities.

Today, tens of thousands of people benefit directly and indirectly from the work of MACDC’s members, which annually build or preserve more than 1,000 homes, create or preserve 2,000 job opportunities, contribute to 1,000 locally-owned businesses, help 17,000 families—and attract $200 million in private investments.

MACDC members build or preserve more than 1,000 homes every year.
Health Care for All

Health Care for All, one of the nation’s leading membership-based health advocacy organizations, was founded in 1985 with the help of a $50,000 grant from the Boston Foundation. Working with more than 100 community-based coalitions and organizations, this highly effective organization focuses on those most at risk of falling through the cracks of the current health care system—the uninsured, children, low-income elderly people, immigrant communities and people with disabilities. Its slogan is “real change for real people.”

“The Boston Foundation has been there since the beginning, standing shoulder-to-shoulder with us in the fight for fair and equal health care for all,” said Executive Director John McDonough, “and it continues to be a partner in the campaign to provide access to health care for the poor and disenfranchised.”
The federal Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 marked the most dramatic change in immigrant regulations in 30 years—and its passage created an urgent need for local groups to work together to assure its effective implementation. Enter the Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition (MIRA), launched in June of 1987 with a start-up grant of $25,000 from the Boston Foundation.

Today, MIRA is a statewide association made up of more than 100 community agencies, legal service providers, labor unions and immigrant rights organizations—including a number of groups also funded by the Foundation, such as those representing the Cambodian, Central American, Haitian, Irish and Vietnamese communities. As federal legislation affecting the state’s 200,000 undocumented immigrants and more than 900,000 legal immigrants continues to evolve, the need for MIRA’s voice is more important than ever.
The Partnership

The Partnership, Inc. was formed in 1987 through the merger of The Boston Committee and the Corporation for Boston, two groups of business and civic leaders dedicated to promoting and strengthening diversity in Boston’s business community. The Boston Foundation made a major grant of $200,000 for the initial expenses of the new organization, which was created with the mission of addressing inequalities related to the under-representation of people of color in Boston’s business, nonprofit and government sectors.

The Partnership has grown and expanded its mission to serve professionals of color of African, Hispanic and Asian descent, as well as Native Americans. Through its renowned year-long leadership program, it works with individuals at all points along the leadership pipeline—from college students to mid-career professionals to senior executives—with the goal of developing and sharpening their leadership skills, building networks and leveraging their influence. The Partnership has graduated more than 1,500 alumni and has 200 corporate partners.
Martin Luther King once said: “Everyone can be great, because everyone can serve.” Few organizations embody the spirit behind those words as eloquently as City Year. Founded in Boston in 1988, with the help of an early grant from the Boston Foundation of $30,000, this self-described “action tank” of young volunteers began with just 50 members. Today its signature youth service corps has grown to more than 1,000 young adults from diverse backgrounds—and programs have been established in 15 other cities across the country and in South Africa.

“The Boston Foundation was there at the beginning for City Year,” says co-founder and President Michael Brown, “and the Foundation helped to launch the City Year Alumni Association, an investment in the active citizenship of more than 8,000 young people who have the idealism, skills and passion to be leaders for life.”
In 1992, youth violence related to gangs and drugs was rending the fabric of Boston’s neighborhoods. When a shooting and stabbing spilled into a funeral service at Morning Star Baptist Church, clergy and lay leaders decided to mobilize. Their efforts resulted in the Boston Ten Point Coalition, an organization that is dedicated to positively redirecting the lives of at-risk Black and Latino youth.

With a special pool of $50,000 created to respond to the crisis, the Boston Foundation provided a start-up grant to the new Coalition and funded other groups working to increase the peace. These organizations, working in partnership with government, would eventually achieve a period of calm and an approach to stemming violence that came to be called “The Boston Miracle.” Since then, the Boston Ten Point Coalition has inspired a national ten-point organization and continues to work passionately to connect with and protect Boston’s children.
In 1997, when Michael Porter, a professor at Harvard University’s Business School, came to the Boston Foundation to give a speech to the Foundation’s donors, he called its office “hallowed ground” because of the Foundation’s early support of an organization he had founded called the Initiative for a Competitive Inner City (ICIC).

Launched in 1994 with the help of a $100,000 grant from the Foundation, ICIC focuses on building profitable businesses that generate real jobs in urban areas. One effort to benefit from ICIC’s advice became an agency in Boston’s city government. Called the Back Streets Office, it nurtures small and mid-sized companies operating within the city’s borders. Back Streets businesses present a powerful argument for ICIC’s work—4,000 of them are providing 100,000 Bostonian’s with jobs, representing 20 percent of the total number of jobs in the city.
In 1995, an award-winning national model for reclaiming this country's schoolyards began taking shape when the Boston Schoolyard Initiative was created as a public/private partnership. The Boston Foundation was there at the beginning as an original member of the Funders Collaborative, which has contributed a combined total of more than $4 million in funding for new schoolyards in response to proposals from schools. The fund is administered by the Foundation and—for the Initiative’s first decade—its offices were located at the Boston Foundation.

The City of Boston also has been the Initiative’s primary partner in the revitalization of schoolyards, providing project management and $16 million from the School Department’s capital budget to fund improvements to public school grounds. Since the Initiative was established, 61 new schoolyards have been constructed, in some cases contributing to the rebirth of entire neighborhoods.
In 1992, BELL, which stands for Building Educated Leaders for Life, was established by a group of idealistic Black and Latino Harvard Law School students who were concerned about the lack of positive role models and programs for children of color in Boston. The Boston Foundation gave BELL a start-up grant of $25,000—and in 2001 raised the funding level to $100,000 to encourage the group to expand.

“The Boston Foundation was a critical partner when we were just a community service project with a small group of students,” says BELL Co-Founder Earl Martin Phalen. “It supported us when we were tutoring students in one school in Boston, then it stayed with us and helped us to grow. With its support we’re now educating more than 8,000 children nationwide.”
Citizen Schools

Lawyers, web designers, architects, all sharing their skills with middle-school students. Young people arguing cases, building websites, even designing buildings. These are the kinds of experiences that 1,500 adult volunteers offer some 2,000 students every year in 11 cities through the innovative Citizen Schools model of apprenticeship programs. Citizen Schools began in Boston with $25,000 in start-up funding from the Boston Foundation.

And the model works. A 2006 study by the Washington, D.C.-based Policy Students Associates concludes that Citizen Schools is succeeding in moving a group of low-income, educationally at-risk students toward a trajectory of high school completion and advancement on to college. Since 1995, Citizen Schools has created and perfected a program that brings communities together to build young people’s skills through hands-on learning.
Boston After School & Beyond

Boston leads the nation in improving after-school programming as the result of three major initiatives and partnerships launched in recent years. In 2001, the Boston Foundation was one of the original partners of the Boston After-School for All Partnership, which grew out of Mayor Thomas M. Menino’s Boston 2:00-to-6:00 After-School Initiative.

The Foundation and 14 other partners pooled their resources to raise more than $34 million for the Partnership with dramatic results: the percentage of young people in after-school programs has more than doubled since the initiative was launched.

In 2004, Boston After School & Beyond, a public/private partnership, was formed as the successor to the earlier programs to organize the entire after-school field into a coherent system. The ultimate goal is to expand access to high-quality programming for all of Boston’s families.
Boston Foundation funding helped lead to the development of Strategies for Children, Inc., a cutting-edge nonprofit organization focused on improving the lives of children and their families through public policy, advocacy and constituency building.

In 1998, the Foundation provided a $60,000 grant to conduct groundbreaking research into attitudes about the education and care of younger children by Bay State opinion leaders and voters.

The results led directly to the Early Education for All Campaign—and in 2001, Strategies for Children was founded to run the campaign. In just a few short years, it has become a nationally recognized public policy and advocacy organization, and the Boston Foundation’s early investment has attracted more than $3 million in additional funds.
In 2001, a successful young entrepreneur named Gerald Chertavian came to the Boston Foundation with an idea for a new organization that would prepare young urban adults for life and work in the new technology-driven society. His goal was to provide them with an opportunity to demonstrate their capabilities at work, and guide them toward higher education and successful, rewarding careers. The Boston Foundation took a chance on his idea and gave the new nonprofit a $50,000 grant.

In Year Up’s first class of 22 students, only two did not graduate. Today, Year Up provides technology training to 350 young adults who receive 18 hours of college credit through an alliance with Cambridge College. The organization has an $8 million budget and has expanded to Metropolitan D.C., Providence, Rhode Island and New York City.
Charles River Conservancy

The Charles River Parklands wind their way through Greater Boston from Newton all the way to Charlestown. Their beauty is taken for granted by some, but for others they represent one of the most significant public spaces in New England.

In 2000, urban planner Renata von Tscharner founded the Charles River Conservancy to make these state owned parklands more attractive, active and accessible to diverse populations. The Conservancy focuses exclusively on strengthening the important resources of this urban riverfront.

The Boston Foundation made a grant of $25,000 to support the development of the Conservancy, which offers educational programs for students as young as seven to learn about the parklands and their ecosystem. The Conservancy’s service learning program complements its volunteer initiative, which brings some 2,000 people to work along the river every year. Now it has plans to open the river to swimming and to create a state of the art skatepark.
Acclaimed conductor Charles Ansbacher, who holds titled positions with orchestras in Boston, Moscow and Sarajevo created the Boston Landmarks Orchestra as a gift to the people of Greater Boston—the community he calls home. His vision was to mount “classical concerts in significant settings”—from open parks to community centers to historic halls—and to make these concerts accessible to everyone.

Inspired by his commitment and the creativity of his idea—and attracted to the Orchestra’s focus on accessibility—the Boston Foundation provided a $25,000 start-up grant in 2001 to make Mr. Ansbacher’s vision a reality. Today, by presenting exceptional music performances in a wide variety of settings, the Orchestra is fostering a broad appreciation of classical music while bringing together the diverse communities of Greater Boston for a shared cultural experience.
Pilot Schools

Unique to Boston, Pilot Schools are Boston public schools with the power to set their own course in everything from curriculum to scheduling and staffing. A 2005 study performed by the Center for Collaborative Education—and funded by the Boston Foundation—reveals that students in Pilot Schools perform better than district averages across every indicator of student engagement and performance. Today, there are 20 Pilot Schools in Boston, with their students making up some 10 percent of the entire student body.

The Foundation has invested some $2.5 million to help district schools explore the Pilot model and convert to this innovative approach to public education. Already, 13 schools have successfully converted with the Foundation’s support—and it is estimated that seven more will join them, making Pilot Schools a major educational option for Greater Boston’s families.
As the 21st-century progresses, the Boston Foundation is taking a proactive stance in meeting some of the region’s most serious challenges. One is the ever-rising cost of housing—a phenomenon that is pushing people out of the neighborhoods in which they grew up and causing many others to move to less expensive parts of the country.

Enter the Commonwealth Housing Task Force, convened by the Boston Foundation and committed to taking on the housing crisis. In its first years alone, the Task Force has made extraordinary progress by drafting and promoting two successful pieces of major legislation—Chapters 40R and 40S—that invite towns and cities to develop high-density housing development in “smart growth” areas near public transportation. Scores of cities are planning to take advantage of the opportunity presented by the legislation.

Solving the Commonwealth’s housing crisis may be the single most important challenge facing this region, and the Boston Foundation and its many deeply-committed partners are working hard to do something about it.
The Boston Indicators Project Website

The Boston Foundation is the coordinator of the Boston Indicators Project, a collaborative effort of Boston’s civic community in partnership with the City of Boston/Boston Redevelopment Authority and the Metropolitan Area Planning Council. The Project offers new ways to understand Boston and its neighborhoods in a regional context and democratizes access to vital information across 10 sectors of community life.

In 2003, the Foundation launched a state-of-the-art website (www.bostonindicators.org), which has become a standard of excellence for indicators projects across the country. Winner of the prestigious Global 2003 Tech Museum Awards, the constantly updated website provides an informational platform for the John LaWare Leadership Forum, which was launched in 2006. The Boston Foundation played a key role in creating the LaWare Forum, which provides a mechanism for business and civic leaders to come together to tackle Greater Boston’s major challenges.
In 2000, longtime Boston activist and distinguished citizen Hubie Jones witnessed a breathtaking performance by the Chicago Children’s Choir, and decided that Boston—the city he loves most—deserved to have its own ambassadors of harmony. The Boston Foundation was there at the beginning, in 2003, with $25,000 in start-up funding to fulfill his vision.

The Boston Children’s Chorus is a multi-racial, multicultural arts organization bringing together children—ages two to twelve—from Boston’s diverse racial, ethnic and socioeconomic communities to discover the power of singing together and represent this great city around the country and the world. Youth development, social healing, community building—these are the goals and, in just a short period of time, the achievements of this remarkable new light in Greater Boston’s nonprofit community.
In 2000 the Boston Foundation convened a group of public and private investors to begin planning an ambitious workforce development initiative. Fully launched in 2003, the SkillWorks initiative is a five-year, $15 million partnership among 14 local and national funders, including the City of Boston and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. In addition to its annual $500,000 contribution, the Boston Foundation coordinates what has become the largest and most ambitious workforce development initiative in Boston’s history.

Responding to the workforce needs of Boston’s health, hotel, building services and automotive industries, SkillWorks actively engages employers in designing programs that will provide them with a stream of reliable, skilled employees for years to come. Nothing could be more important to Boston’s future viability than helping real people find real jobs that pay a living wage with benefits.
Established in 1915, the Boston Foundation is Greater Boston’s community foundation—a major grantmaker, provider of information, civic leader and partner in philanthropy for hundreds of generous people.

If you would like to be a part of the continuing story of the Boston Foundation’s commitment to innovation, contact us at 617-338-1700 or visit our website at www.tbf.org.

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