



NCTI 2008 Innovators Conference

Session Title Panel Discussion: Public Private Partnerships
Names of Presenters Chris Dede, Barry Fingerhut, Larry Goldberg, Steven Seleznow, Robert Sinclair
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Summary: This panel on public/private partnerships discussed instances of success, proposed frameworks and models of change for consideration, and answered questions about how states can leverage their own resources to implement their own types of partnerships.

Barry Fingerhut, Managing Director, Synconium Partners (*Moderator*)

Barry introduced the panel and noted that the last panel on public/private partnerships represented good contextual thought. Barry proposed a couple questions for each of the panelists to answer focused around asking, "Is this [current models] the best form for public/private partnerships? If so, how can it be increased and improved?" He noted it was important to think about what this structure is, does it make sense, is it the highest and best use for the people involved in research, etc. Furthermore, he noted that to be a realistic thinker, people will have financial concerns on how collaboration is occurring in this form, and what can be done if anything can be done about it.

Chris Dede, Timothy E. Wirth Professor, Learning Technologies, Harvard Graduate School of Education

Chris works in emerging technologies for learning and how you take innovations from hothouse environments to scale widespread adoption. He proposed three levels of partnership as a framework that conference participants can consider:

1. *Surface-level.* Many of us have partnerships of this type, to provide resources or conduct a project, and both groups benefit. While these partnerships succeed, their impact tends to be largely local. Many people at the conference have raised deeper questions on how do we get off feeling marginalized and raise the same barriers and questions each year.
2. *Mission partnership.* In this instance, each group goes beyond "what you do well and how I can help you do well," to "here's my mission that you may have insights about, and in turn I'm going to help you think about your mission."

Mission partnerships are more transformative. Chris then cites that a good example of this is what David Rose and his CAST colleagues have been able to do at NSF – because they've been patient about working with NSF program officers in talking about Universal Design for Learning (UDL), not about how they should be funded. UDL is now increasingly coming out as required in NSF grant priorities. David has also worked with congressional staff re: changes in legislation, which has a broad impact. In sum: partnerships advance missions.



3. *Transformative partnerships.* Group of partners working at the mission level individually, get together and ask, “What can we do as a collective of people working at the mission level that works beyond helping you with your current mission and on to transforming your mission in a powerful way?”

Chris thinks that looking at ways, collectively, that you can form mission partnerships and then transformative partnerships, and then work with your powerful ideas to transform the sender of the profession, is very important.

Larry Goldberg, Director of Media Access, WGBH

Larry started by detailing his background; in 1972 he started at WGBH, and the formation of the captioning center was the result of the captioned version of Julia Child’s French Chef. In the 1990s, he began a descriptive service for the blind, and worked on radio for the deaf. In 1993, he established the National Center for Accessible Media to take a research and development look at access technologies. He needed to create funds and established a Business Partners Program (later, Strategic Partners program), which considers what their mission is and then what a partners’ mission may be.

Larry then discusses some of his partnerships: they used to be about making media and technology accessible to people with disabilities in their schools, homes, and communities, and about trying to serve the needs of his organization and the needs of corporations whether they know it or not. One of the earliest partnerships was with AOL – they realized the user-interface was not accessible to blind and other with disabilities, and they provided some consulting towards that end. Additionally, Adobe realized that Flash-based video needed a captioning solution; WGBH had the tools to do so, and now it’s being widely used. WGBH also has a long-term relationship with IBM; they have worked together just to think together about projects that could help their mission to spread accessible technology.

Larry cited another example, Vertical Product Accessibility Template, or VPAC (which came out of Section 508 regulations) – they worked on VPAC for many companies.

He then posed the question, “Will recession change our culture?” The accessibility field doesn’t really change. A lot of the field is about market failure not market success, and that’s where we have to fill in the gaps. We are moving into social venture capitalism and social entrepreneurship. One of the ideas they’re working on is a social enterprise incubator with a couple local colleges. Massachusetts has lost a lot of manufacturing jobs and this could help fill some unemployment gaps.

Steven Seleznow, Deputy Director, U.S. Programs, Education, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

Steven shared some stories about scaling up initiatives:

1. What’s happening in this conference room: If we took 20 years off the age of this room (so the average age of this room hypothetically was in the 20s), the meeting would have been scaled around the globe with iPhones, not laptops. People would have critiqued the speakers already (by looking up their speeches online ahead of time, etc.) and the



world would have already known what happened. We have to understand that the market is 'their' market these days – while the current market is set up for us, not them.

2. Handshake and kiss method of partnership: In Texas, we were attempting to scale school reform in Texas. We happened to meet with Governor of Texas after he gave a speech on economic development and bringing information technology to Texas so it was on his mind. We came in and talked about what they could do in Texas. He said he needed to create a pipeline of STEM schools to feed into college after high school and was interested in doing so – partners around the table agreed to divide the cost. Within half an hour of discussion they had a \$110 million deal, and now there are 38 Texas STEM schools and over \$200 million budgeted for them.
3. Ohio is dealing with declining manufacturing base: Ohio business leaders want to rebuild and advance their technology, building on their great history (from early 1900s of a high technology state). Gates told them about Texas and made small \$250,000 grant to the Ohio business roundtable to try and pull initiative together. Gates tried to do it the Texas way and it failed; no one supported it. Ohio's governance shows that Ohio can only do initiatives from "city-states" of Ohio on up, building partners on the ground in Ohio. Eventually the legislature passed a \$200 million STEM bill; Gates also contributed funds to create a final bill for \$220 million.

Bottom line: You could not have achieved the scale without partnerships (in Texas or Ohio).

Steven then added that we have major problems with scaling education in this country, and would argue that part of the scale problem is that every state has a different set of standards and different curriculum. If an entrepreneur wants to sell a product in a particular state or city, you have to customize product around particular standards or attributes and it doesn't make sense from a marketing point to scale it. We're trying to get the nation to move to a place of common standards. The Internet wouldn't have taken hold if there were different standards; medicine wouldn't have advanced if different labs had different medicines. We think this can open the doors to scaling and creating more public-private partnerships to introduce ideas in this room into new markets.

Robert Sinclair, Director of Accessibility, Microsoft Corp.

Robert discussed the broader perspective of how they view partnership at Microsoft. His team owns a full range of accessibility and aging technologies worldwide. They look at and exercise many kinds of partnerships and collaborations in order to succeed; just looking at the scope of disabilities and tech in the market today, the breadth is enormous. As engineers, the people on his team and in the company, there's no better possible way to understand and have the full depth of knowledge, and have to collaborate with people around the world to gain a better understanding of the problem. There's no way to be successful without partnership or collaboration.

Robert discussed types of partnerships:

1. Engineering collaboration partnerships: Work done with assistive technology (AT) vendors and the programming has been in place for many years. Gary Moulton started



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an AT vendor program which has been successful because it gives a forum and a model to work with vendors that have deep expertise from working with consumers to create innovative solutions for their needs. His company provides platform technology to build it on, training information, new ways to market products, etc.

2. Public and private: They completed some work in Miami – the Senior PC project. They ran a few pilots around the U.S. to provide specific combo of hardware and software along with HP, and local organizations provided training. They also had trainers come into community centers, etc., and could permit credits for classes. The idea was to put technology into everyday space to support the process of using technology, which was an interesting new model for deploying technology into the market for this population. Technology has a greater application than narrow markets for some disabilities – it's about reaching partners and making technology more approachable. They also did work with Microsoft Society – lent technology, and did research into different techniques. Microsoft Society wanted to put together a portal to set up a self-assessment and understand what technologies were available today to help them immediately.

Robert also noted a common problem: a lack of awareness and understanding of the technology that exists today. A lot of the discussion today [at the conference] focused around new technologies and innovation, and how to break down barriers. He believes the solutions exist today, we just need to think about how to apply existing techs in a new way (technology, research, ideas). He believes that we can look more broadly at partnerships, find another organization to partner with, and think of 2-4 ideas (and notes the idea of a mission partnership is a good one). Last year they formed an AT interoperability alliance to bring special interest groups, vendors, researchers, and others to come together around one table and unveil the solutions that exist today or new developments to look into. It's a way of creating a broader dialogue and more diverse set of partnerships and collaborations.

Discussion

1. *(For Steve) How many other states are coming to you right now to try and do what you have done?*

Steve: I think every state has. We're working on initiatives in NY, NC, and CA. It's a question of if people are willing to collaborate with each other around a set of outcomes they want to achieve. There's not a state we work with where we haven't found willingness on the part of state officials who want to try to figure out how to create partnerships to leverage their combined resources. Federal government – jointly-funded proposals can be created with large amounts of money.

2. *(For Steve) What are the common standards you're thinking about?*

Steve: If you took, in math, science, English, and social studies, and you went on the website of every state department of education, I would challenge you to define what the states expect your children to do in your schools. They are obscure, sometimes poorly written, and every state has them. It was appropriate in this nation to have different state standards when the economies of those states were driven by different states and different needs. We are now in a different type of economy, a global economy, so for the



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nation to compete and the nation to get equity about who gets the jobs around the world, we can't have 2 years of math required in Washington state and 4 years in Massachusetts. Long ago that may have been fine; and Massachusetts, driven by the academic institutions of medicine, etc., you had to have 4 years. If the nation is to move to a set of common standards to enable the real world [and keep up in the global economy] changes have to happen.

3. *You've been talking about partnerships – I wonder if any of you would share your perspectives of partnering around the issue of IP.*

Robert: IP is more complex all the time. Microsoft is engaging with some models [such as] accessibility; we are participating in for-profit projects, research collaborations, and in all these cases there is intellectual property contributed by multiple participants or shared IP from a partnership. There are new licensing models being created all the time and it's increasingly complex. I think there are many dialogues taking place, looking for utopian model to address all the various interests, but it's clearly a major concern and an active debate. I know that we've seen the old models, the way we're operating 25 years ago, aren't effective because it prevents us from participating in some of the things we need to participate in to move forward. In the last few years Microsoft has announced changes in its approach, new principles of collaboration, new models – this is something that continues to evolve. In accessibility space we contributed technology that we spent 8 years developing, and it's now being used open-source. It's an example of Microsoft changing its approach because we recognized our old model prevented progress and held Microsoft (and others) back.

Larry: Our intellectual property is what we create and we're doing everything we can to free it up for as many people as possible, but it's a slow process.

Chris: one of the problems is it's still a property model. What we want to move to is an intellectual capital model – it's an investment and you can make the investment in different ways to get different return on it. One of the ways is to contribute it, and get social capital back.

4. *(For Steve) Margo Izzo from Ohio comments on the earlier information regarding the partnership with metro-schools (central Ohio STEM school and Ohio State U. partnership) to help transition from school to community colleges and Ohio State/employment. What is lacking in legislation in the \$200 million education is the word "disability." When you come to states to develop your partnerships, could you use your dollars and insist that disability be part of the population served through these initiatives?*

Steve: Great point. We did that grant in Ohio because our mission of the foundation that all lives have equal value – when we did it, our funds in education focused on kids who were poor, African-American, etc. When the original proposal was being done we said we wouldn't put our money in unless the funds targeted those kids. Public/private partnerships should leverage funds for all students.