CONTENTS

The Community Innovation Grant (CIG) ........................................................................................................... 3

Environment in which the CIG operates ........................................................................................................... 6
  Persistent Historical and Social Attitudes .................................................................................................. 6
  Challenging Funder and Policy Landscapes ............................................................................................. 7
  Stressful and Competitive Everyday Operations for Nonprofits ................................................................. 8

Critical Functions ................................................................................................................................................ 9
  Providing Sizeable, Multi-Year Funding .................................................................................................. 9
  Supporting Research and Development (“R&D”) ...................................................................................... 10
  Facilitating Collaboration ....................................................................................................................... 11
  Providing a Bird’s-Eye View .................................................................................................................... 11
  Building Credibility ................................................................................................................................... 12

Impacts ............................................................................................................................................................... 12
  Impact Profile: Church Hill Activities & Tutoring (CIG winner, 2014) ...................................................... 14
  Impact Profile: CodeVA (CIG finalist, 2014) .......................................................................................... 15
  Impact Profile: ART 180 (CIG winner, 2015) ......................................................................................... 16
  Impact Profile: UMFS (CIG finalist, 2016) ............................................................................................. 17
  Impact Profile: Storefront for Community Design (CIG finalist, 2015) .................................................. 18
  Impact Profile: Possibilities Project (CIG finalist, 2014) ....................................................................... 19

Unintended Consequences ................................................................................................................................. 20

The CIG Process ............................................................................................................................................... 21
  Managing the “Innovation” in the CIG .................................................................................................... 24

Moving Forward ................................................................................................................................................. 27
  General Program Recommendations ...................................................................................................... 27
  Process-Specific Recommendations ......................................................................................................... 27
“People who are afraid to take a risk rarely get anywhere.”
- E. Claiborne Robins, Sr.¹

THE COMMUNITY INNOVATION GRANT (CIG)

In 2014, in keeping with the foundation’s legacy, the Robins Foundation Board of Directors empowered its new CEO and staff to find ideas that would lead to transformative change in complex social issues facing the Richmond area. With that goal in mind, and to encourage new thinking and collaboration among Richmond Region nonprofits, the foundation launched the Community Innovation Grant (CIG), a $500,000 annual award that can be distributed over as many as three years.

From 2014 to 2016, 96 organizations submitted 105 applications for CIG funding. Three of those applicants were each awarded $500,000, but in total, $2.5 million was awarded to 12 organizations as part of the program.

After several grant cycles, Robins Foundation staff engaged Philip Reese, LLC, a Richmond based insights and planning consultancy, to explore emerging impacts of the CIG. Part of Robins Foundation’s motivation for establishing the CIG was a desire to shape visionary partnerships that foster strong nonprofits, thriving people, and a dynamic community.² This assessment project was designed to address these goals.

Figure 1. CIG Background

The desire to undertake this assessment was driven by a number of internal questions:

- Have Robins Foundation’s philanthropic efforts to spark social innovation impacted its internal innovation culture?
- What has engaging in the CIG application process meant for Robins staff, board, and community partners?
- What has receiving CIG funds meant for the programming and internal culture of the 12 grant recipients?

² CIG Information Sessions 9-2-2014-draft.pdf
- Have the CIG awards impacted the philosophy or practices of peer funders?
- What has the CIG meant to the community at large?

Given the breadth of these questions and the recent introduction of the CIG, over the course of data collection the project goal was narrowed to focus on gaining a deeper understanding of the effects of the CIG on the nonprofit and philanthropic community, and on what makes the CIG meaningful to the community. Data analysis and reporting focused on these two goals, and findings will be used to aid the Robins Foundation’s thinking about the evolution of the CIG in 2018 and beyond.

*Figure 2. Assessment Overview*

Philip Reese used a qualitative approach to examine research participants’ beliefs, effects, wishes, and needs. This report highlights the context, successes, challenges, and opportunities that can aid decision-making about the future of the CIG. It emphasizes the most important themes that emerged from the study and includes verbatim comments to exemplify the common perspectives expressed by research participants. Some verbatim comments have been edited for clarity.
ENVIRONMENT IN WHICH THE CIG OPERATES

The CIG exists in a complex environment that influences how nonprofits, peer funders, and the community view innovation. This context has implications for how the CIG can be most effective. We investigated perceptions of the environment by asking research participants to map and describe its fundamental traits. This revealed a number of trends in thinking.

*Figure 3. CIG Context*

Persistent Historical and Social Attitudes

“A lot of the poverty issues took three hundred years to make and may take three hundred years to fix.” (CIG Recipient)

Some characteristics, such as risk aversion and persistent racial and economic segregation, stem from a long history of beliefs and practices. Many research participants commented on those factors and their impact in Richmond.
“Conformity is a word that would come to my mind. You’re really not supposed to talk about what’s wrong, and I think that’s a really big problem.” (CIG Recipient)

“Isolationism is probably the largest problem in much of our impoverished communities. The fact that they’re all sort of neatly tucked in between the prison and the interstate is pretty brutal.” (CIG Recipient)

These characteristics appear to go hand-in-hand with an environment that seems to have little tolerance for missteps. Almost all nonprofit leaders said they feel pressure to produce results quickly and often feel beholden to “fads” in giving and the shifting attention of donors. Highly unequal relations of power exist between funders and the funded. They can lead funders to feel applicants are “telling them what they want to hear.” It also can lead funded organizations to feel that they must bend to the will and interests of funders.

At the same time, some nonprofit leaders noted that Richmond appears to be experiencing an attitudinal shift that is revitalizing business and community engagement. They also felt and that people across the City of Richmond is becoming more aware of the issues that hinder many of its residents from fully accessing opportunities and resources.

“Richmond as a whole is going through such a renaissance on the business side, and I see that happening in the nonprofit world too.” (CIG Recipient)

“It’s exciting, but a fourth of our neighbors are not participating and contributing in the boom. So, how do we get them to take this great idea, make it even better, so that those pathways for connectivity, can grow and they can be their best selves?” (CIG Recipient)

Challenging Funder and Policy Landscapes

Nonprofit leaders and peer funders shared their views about the policies and practices that characterize the philanthropic and governmental landscapes.

They believe that restricted gifts, funding decisions made in isolation, and funders’ emphasis on supporting programs rather than processes and capacity, have all hindered collaboration between funders. Collaboration between nonprofits is also stifled as organizations focused on similar issues find themselves competing for scarce resources.
Many nonprofit leaders said that funders typically rely on traditional outcomes measures to evaluate effectiveness. This can discourage the development and testing of innovative, unproven solutions that could be more effective than existing approaches to problems but need time for incubation and growth and, as a result, may not have predictable outcomes for some time.

Peer funders also acknowledged the existence of donor desires to hear specific, quantifiable, and quick results from giving.

“I think sometimes the nonprofit sector doesn’t understand that there’s a lot of pressure on the funding community to...show those results.” (Peer Funder)

“Theyir initial measures of success probably should have been not about kids and workforce development. It should have been more about how they could become a better partner in the community.” (Community Partner)

As well, participants said that the commonwealth’s decentralized political structures can complicate broad adoption of new initiatives.

“[You have] to sell it to the 128 commonwealth counties... [You hear], ‘Oh, that sounds like a great idea but...I really don’t know if it’s going to work.’” (CIG Recipient)

Stressful and Competitive Everyday Operations for Nonprofits

Nonprofit leaders and program managers within organizations of all sizes, even those that are well-established, consistently reported that community needs far outstrip funding capacity. The result can be tough competition for limited resources. They referenced Richmond’s many small, low-capacity and disconnected entities working on problems in their own unique ways with little incentive to collaborate. They repeatedly described their everyday operating environments as highly stressful, with a near-constant search for funding. This can suppress collaboration, especially as, working closely together on a mutual goal requires time, compromise, and trust, while grantees and applicants feel pressured to show impact quickly.

“As an industry, we are undercapitalized both financially and from a human capacity standpoint. It’s too many people doing a small piece of a much larger pie.” (CIG Recipient)
CRITICAL FUNCTIONS

The CIG is making unique and important contributions that are highly valued within a complex and shifting local landscape. Five critical functions emerged from the data that research participants specifically associated with the CIG.

Figure 4. The CIG’s Critical Functions

Providing Sizeable, Multi-Year Funding

Principal among all critical functions is the relative size and duration of the CIG. Local nonprofit leaders said much of their time is normally spent cobbling together one-year grants of about $20,000 that support programs, not operations. Larger, multi-year funding, like that provided by the CIG, allow recipients to briefly shift their attention from the frenzy of securing funding on an annual basis to more strategic initiatives. This type of
funding provides time to think, a resource sorely lacking in many nonprofit environments, but one that is critical for longer term, strategic decision making.3

Furthermore, since CIG funding is not restricted to programs, it allows organizations to sustain early stage program staff, giving them the opportunity to build their initiative to sustainability. Leaders said no other grant in the region provides this level and latitude of support.

“This work is hard ... it would be nice for funders to support you to pay the bills; grow your capacity; take a breather and come back stronger to fight another day.” (CIG Recipient)

Supporting Research and Development (“R&D”)

“In Richmond, when things get messy, they slow down or stop. (CIG Recipient)

“People just aren’t willing to move or go after something unless they have that initial [assurance that] ‘we did it.’” (CIG Recipient)

Supporting social innovation is a critical and otherwise unaddressed need in a region that participants describe as traditionally resistant to change and siloed in its approaches to problem-solving. The CIG provides grants at a level and duration that allow for important new learning, and through the CIG, Robins is modeling risk tolerance in a risk-averse context. Furthermore, as the program has evolved, support has moved toward projects that are tackling large issues with the potential of systems-level impact. Nonprofit organizations are therefore able to develop interventions that may otherwise go untested, and to reflect critically on the results of their effort.

“[The CIG] makes you open up your window to wrestle with some hard questions. Where are you seeing success? And what are those assumptions that were not fully what you expected?” (CIG Recipient)

Facilitating Collaboration

New partnerships between organizations exist as a direct result of the CIG’s emphasis on projects that address a complex problem by leveraging the skills and expertise of more than one organization. The application process itself is also collaborative, as applicants work closely with their project partners and Robins staff members to develop their proposal. In addition, applicants have an opportunity to share knowledge and experiences with other organizations.

The CIG’s emphasis on collaboration was unique in the local landscape when it emerged in 2014, and nonprofit leaders say that other funders are now following suit. This ripple effect means that more and more funding dollars are tied to organizations working together in new ways.

“[We’re learning that] no organization can kind of do it alone. One of the biggest things that we got from the CIG was really tight partnerships with a lot of the other participants.”
(CIG Recipient)

Providing a Bird’s-Eye View

The Robins Foundation has developed knowledge of what many nonprofits are accomplishing in the region. The foundation also is leading and participating in regional conversations, such as within the Capital Region Collaborative. Research participants said that the foundation’s awareness of innovative regional and national approaches to social problems offers local nonprofits a unique view of what is going on in communities, from the participant level to policy initiatives. CIG information sessions and applicant publicity spur cross-sector conversations and collaborations, enabling nonprofits and the community to gain a broader view of issues and the actors that are tackling them.

“I remember being really excited, but also very curious…that there’s 40 people in this room, and they all think that they really have this transformative idea. What could that possibly be?” (CIG Recipient)
Building Credibility

Research participants associated this important contribution with (1) the coaching that the staff provides during the application process, (2) the resulting relationship-building that occurs between Robins and CIG applicants, and (3) the publicity that accompanies being a CIG finalist (even if one does not win “the big prize”).

Smaller applicants said the relationship with Robins helped them gain a foothold in the local funding world, and across organizations of various sizes, nonprofits said the causes they champion were aided by the attention that comes with winning funding from the Robins Foundation, particularly CIG funding.

“We are treated with a different level of respect for the kind of work that we are able to do with the CIG. We are also now being recognized on a national level for this work, which includes access to other funding sources.” (CIG Recipient)

These critical functions appear to be important, because together, they enable the CIG to help nonprofits address “basic needs” like operating capacity, as well as “higher order” wishes, such as deeper funder involvement in their work, knowledge sharing, and most important, time to think and dream. Other grants do not typically provide these benefits.

IMPACTS

The CIG and the R&D it funds appear to be positively affecting individuals as well as local, regional, and commonwealth level approaches to problems and laying the foundation for future systems-level impact.

Grant recipients reported specific and broad-ranging results emerging from CIG-funded initiatives, such as

- “Micro” level impacts on individuals participating in direct service programs (for example, one program equips teens with the self-management and personal development skills needed to keep appointments, develop a personal budget, become comfortable speaking to authority figures, and maintain employment. These skills in turn have the potential for multiplier effects in their lives
- Influences on individual organizations (such as a small nonprofit that is able to
develop a logic model to clearly define its process and to begin winning funding for its work)

• Influences on larger public institutions (such as a medical system and law enforcement agency) that have begun to think about ways they can work together on a complex problem that intersects their areas of expertise

• Effects on legislative bodies that are changing policy related to issues such as computer science education and youth incarceration at the statewide level

Some participants, including some peer funders, also believed that the CIG has influenced local shifts in thinking within the funder landscape.

“I think a lot more funders are saying, ‘who are you collaborating with?’ I think it’s just making everyone think more about that.” (CIG Recipient)

“We are building relationships and partnering more. Our program staffs are coming together and learning more together.” (Peer Funder)
A place-based workforce development project in Richmond’s East End

CHAT’s Young Entrepreneurs of Richmond Project focuses on increases job-training and employment opportunities for the youth in the emerging neighborhood of North Church Hill by expanding existing structures, collaborating with more established local businesses.

**CIG-Related Accomplishments**

- Developed partnership with Bon Secours
- Conducted community study to support site selection and brand development
- Developed and branded program as Work Leadership Institute
- Hired and trained staff to oversee program
- Designed, renovated and opened Front Porch Café in September 2017
- Currently employ 29 students in Work Leadership Institute

“I think creating a public community space has had more benefits than I realized. Just the other day I saw an old Richmond guy who wants to invest in the community meeting with a young man who writes books about racial conflict and reconciliation. I found out later they were introduced at the cafe. We are really thankful for the opportunity [the CIG] provided our organization.”
Impact Profile: CodeVA (CIG finalist, 2014)

A statewide initiative focused on ensuring computer science education for all Virginia children

CodeVA provides access to sustained professional development for all Virginia teachers, preparing them to teach this essential literacy in our modern economy.

CIG-Related Accomplishments

- Trained 1,700+ teachers who work in 70% of the Commonwealth’s school divisions
- Programs provided computer science access to more than 150,000 students
- Wrote and secured passage of three legislative bills impacting 1.3 million Virginia K-12 students
- Averaged 420 students attending summer programs (earned income)
- Partnered with dozens of schools, government agencies and universities
- Currently training 20+ new computer science trainers to support scaling their work

“Without Robins, we wouldn’t exist, and [Virginia] would not be the first state in the nation with ‘computer science for all’ mandate legislation for all students from Kindergarten to graduation. Robins was THE core partner to making this happen.”
Impact Profile: ART 180 (CIG winner, 2015)

A unique partnership focused on the school to prison pipeline

ART 180’s Youth Self-Advocacy Through Art program works with incarcerated youth to sharpen their advocacy and leadership skills, share their experiences through creative expression, and mobilize communities for change.

CIG-Related Accomplishments

- Worked with 130 youth (at Bon Air and Richmond Juvenile Detention Centers)
- Trained 40 police officers and 60 recruits to foster better interactions between police and young people
- Resulting exhibitions have toured throughout Virginia, including being installed in the General Assembly to raise awareness of the issues
- Estimated that several hundred thousand people have seen the exhibitions
- Secured $200,000 from the Ford Foundation to continue this work
- Showcased nationally by Ford Foundation

“*We are treated with a different level of respect for the kind of work that we are able to do with the CIG. We are also now being recognized on a national level for this work, which includes access to other funding sources.*”
Impact Profile: UMFS (CIG finalist, 2016)

A national best-practice model for foster kids and their families

The UMFS Extreme Recruitment program helps current or potential foster children find homes by locating and reconnecting them with relatives or other supportive adults.

CIG-Related Accomplishments

Having just begun their grant cycle, UMFS’s accomplishments are primarily focused on relationship building, learning, and knowledge sharing, as is appropriate in the early stages of an innovative project.

- Learned the complexity of processes, policies, and politics that impact the ability to solve the problem they’re working on
- Implemented consultation calls with an organization working to implement the program in another state to learn how to navigate political environments
- Promoted the value of rapid reconnection of children with families via the Children Services Act at the state-level
- Worked to form a coalition across four states that focuses on national funding to test the approach in each state

“We’ve been able to educate, support, and influence our state partners and have demonstrated success through this project that we believe will allow us to make even further strides in the year ahead.”
A community-based hub that provides multidisciplinary programming for youth

Six Points Innovation Center (6PIC) brings together five organizations in a safe teen center where neighborhood youth have access to innovative programming in the arts, urban ecology, education assistance, public media, public history, and advocacy.

CIG-Related Accomplishments

- Raised $290,000 to support the Six Points Innovation Center
- Opened a full-service teen center serving an average of 60 teens per week
- Hosted six nonprofit programs to benefit RPS teens
- Conducted more than 200 free design-plan consultations
- Engaged over 125 professional volunteers in the fields of architecture, urban planning, design, marketing, public relations, and organizational development
- Completed nine Design Education Series

“Because of the CIG, we were able to pitch design and building professionals on donating their time, materials, and expertise to help us build out the 6PIC facility far below market rate costs. We have also been able to, collectively, leverage the CIG award in other grant asks to fund specific program pieces and operational functions shared among partner organizations.”
A unique policy- and research-driven partnership that supports aging-out foster kids

The Possibilities Project, a partnership between Better Housing Coalition and Children’s Home Society, provides safe and stable housing, trauma-informed therapeutic counseling, and connections to networks that build permanent relationships with adults to offer a lifetime of support and guidance. Virginia currently ranks 50th in the nation in supporting youth aging out of foster care.

CIG-Related Accomplishments

• Completed research with Child Trends to bring national programs and policies that address the needs for youth who age out of foster care to Virginia
• Provided housing, mentoring and counseling for 16 former foster care individuals, all of whom have jobs and three-quarters of whom are enrolled in or have completed post-secondary education
• Developed replicable research-based program
• Won state-level recognition for innovative efforts to address housing needs
• Launched The Task Force on Transitioning Youth to make policy recommendations for improving access and services provided to youth aging out of foster care

“We may have eventually [launched] a similar effort without the CIG grant, but the award was a big momentum boost that helped us clarify our goals and helped attract other funders.”
These profiles show the ways that CIG funding is directly affecting organizations and the community members they serve. They also illustrate how CIG is beginning to bear fruit more broadly.

**Unintended Consequences**

The most public challenges the CIG has encountered stem from false starts, but there have been other instances in which organizations have needed to pause and reset their initiatives.

While some projects have encounter external challenges beyond their control, such as changing leadership within key systems and regulatory changes, other collaborations have not been completely prepared to move forward with their proposed projects. In these instances, it has been difficult for the participating leadership to build effective working relationships, resulting in slower-than-expected progress.

“We're learning [that] collaboration is very difficult, and just because you get money doesn't mean that collaboration moves smoothly. Defining the roles of the partner organizations has been tough, and sometimes, to be frank, contentious.” (CIG recipient)

Some applicants shared significant challenges with governance and organizational readiness that emerged as a result of the CIG application process. In some cases these leaders have found a path forward to continue their work, and believe the experience was a learning opportunity.

“This grant asks organizations to step out and be collaborative, and that's what happens. Then when people are forced into making decisions...if a board feels like they're not in the same vision...then they feel like it's not a place for them anymore.” (CIG Recipient)

The CIG also has had unintended lingering effects, with a few participants reporting a sense that the application process produces an unhealthy competitive attitude among nonprofits.

“I [now] see nonprofit organizations willing to do anything to get any amount of funding. When we left the Robins grant we called it ‘The Hunger Games.’” (CIG Recipient)
Some of these organizations experienced these setbacks as opportunities (albeit painful ones) to alter course and shift organizational focus in ways that strengthened them. Others have continued their work at a distance from Richmond's traditional philanthropic sources.

THE CIG PROCESS

Research participants used a process map to reflect on significant moments in their application experience, revealing a number of common perspectives. Applicant and award winner experiences within various parts of the CIG process reveal benefits as well as pain points.

First, the process is challenging for all organizations, regardless of size. It moves quickly, and, despite the information sessions held early in the process, often brings surprises.

“It was tight. Very tight. But it really forced us to be focused and very intentional in our work. Knowing up front the steps in the process would have helped us. Because, every time we said, ‘Phew, alright, that’s behind us,’ then we made it to the next step we’d get excited and go, ‘oh my goodness, next week!’” (CIG applicant)

Staff say the process is purposefully designed to shed light on applicants’ ability to solve problems creatively, but the intent appears to be lost on applicants.

“I cannot identify any purpose behind the lack of transparency here, other than hoop-jumping.” (CIG Recipient)
**Figure 5. Process Characteristics**

The CIG application process is uniquely intense and can have lingering effects.
In addition to the quick pace and expected outcomes, the timing of the application adds another layer of stress for applicants. CIG applicants who successfully reach later rounds of the process find themselves devoting significant resources to it during most of the fourth calendar quarter, often their busiest fund-development period. Applicants reported that they were stretched to respond quickly—often with senior leaders—during a time of other demanding and critical development activities.

For organizations with dedicated development staff, the timing can mean late work nights, but does not impact service delivery. For smaller organizations, attention paid to the CIG application can disrupt the execution of existing programs.

“They took so much during such a busy time, and it was almost like they weren’t aware. And it’s kind of like, don’t they know? Don’t come after nonprofits in December.” (CIG Applicant)

Applicants who continued to the final rounds said they would have appreciated more time to reflect on their proposed idea, to confirm partnership commitments and roles, and to assess the ways that winning might impact other existing work.

“The last few rounds felt like they went too fast. We did not have the chance to sanity check what we had committed to ... to see if it would actually work.” (CIG Recipient)

Finalists who presented their proposals to the Board expressed that this stage felt disconnected from the earlier parts of the process. The final presentation was described as a “dog and pony show” by many of these applicants, in contrast to the consultative and advisory feel of earlier stages. The nature, location, and experience of the Board presentation made this stage particularly jarring for some applicants. After months of thinking deeply about their projects, applicants were often surprised by the types of questions that seemed to make or break their chances of success.

After being awarded the grant, some winners expected there to be continued close contact with Foundation staff and later felt somewhat adrift as they entered the execution stage, especially as they began to confront uncertainties within their projects.

“We created this whole big project which we had spent more time on, and in three days we had to condense it into a one-year project. Remake this. Now I think our fear is we made it
unrealistic. I think we’re feeling a little accountable to a plan that is unrealistic. I think our worry is we’re going to look like bad partners.” (CIG Recipient)

Despite these challenges with the process, most responding applicants spoke to a singularly powerful outcome for their organizations: the process drove significant improvements in the way they tell their own stories and approach their concept. This is an important benefit of participation, as it enables them to more clearly express what they do, why they do it in a specific way, and how supporters can better engage in advancing their work.

“[The process] was so iterative, which was good because I think by the time it got done, [our concept] was better.” (CIG Recipient)

The guidance and support of the Robins Foundation staff is also universally appreciated.

“The Robins team was really trying to figure out how to help us be successful. So, I know it had to be tough for them when they went through the process of choosing the applicants that got funded, because they were so supportive.” (CIG Recipient)

A wish for more time to think and dream big appears to drive much of the appreciation expressed by applicants. The CIG process demands that applicants repeatedly step away from day-to-day operations to pay more attention to innovation and the future of their work. Leveraging time in this way appears to have a great deal of value to applicants, as it addresses their wishes for knowledge, for connection with other organizations and with funders, and for recognition and appreciation of their work.

Even the exercise in reflection around the CIG application process as part of this assessment was viewed as an opportunity for highly desired knowledge sharing, collaboration, and inclusion in funder thinking and planning.

Managing the “Innovation” in the CIG

Alongside the specifics of timing and deliverables, the more general idea of “innovation” is an important aspect of the CIG process and deserves specific discussion.
Fundamentally, CIG-funded programs are innovation projects in that they attempt to develop and apply a novel solution to a problem.\textsuperscript{4}

Figure 6. Managing Innovation and Risk

The CIG process currently engages what is known as a “Just Do It” (JDI) approach to innovation.\textsuperscript{5} Applicants identify a big problem and propose potential solutions for the Robins staff to evaluate. Winning programs then move directly to launching their solution into the marketplace. This approach bypasses what is called “the messy middle” of the product development cycle, where projects are tested and refined. As a result, winners


do not have time to refine and test their proposed approaches before “hitting the ground running.”

“There’s not that time to work out all of that stuff that happens when you collaborate.”
(CIG Recipient)

The JDI approach is best suited for low risk/low complexity concepts, but the CIG and the solutions it has funded have not been low risk and low complexity. $500,000 is a large investment and applicants are working on complex solutions, for which the “messy middle” must be accounted.

Processes, such as a traditional full stage-gate approach, are used to manage innovation. Stage-gate is characterized by clearly defined phases of activity separated by structured reviews that help determine whether a project should move forward. Additional points about stage-gate as it relates to the CIG are discussed in recommendations.
MOVING FORWARD

Philip Reese provides two types of recommendations: general suggestions for the CIG as a program and specific steps for improving the application and award process.

General Program Recommendations

1. Continue the CIG so that emerging social innovation continues to be supported in Richmond and nascent interventions can be maintained.
2. Diversify the duration and level of CIG funding.
3. Incorporate assessment-driven decision-making points into application and award processes to mitigate risk.
4. Narrow the focus of the CIG to a more specific issue.

Process-Specific Recommendations

This investigation suggests immediate opportunities to reduce some of the stressors related to the CIG application and award.

1. Slow down the pace of the application process, shift the timing of completion away from the fourth quarter of the calendar year.
2. Shift the type and timing of publicity announcements to reduce counterproductive scrutiny and pressure.
3. Introduce other funders to applicants as part of the application process.
4. Clarify the infrastructure requirements for organizations to be well-suited for CIG funding.
5. Review the purpose of the site visits and videos.

Taken together, we believe these recommendations will enable the CIG to continue as a mechanism for spurring catalytic change in a way that is well-suited for the environment in which it operates while meeting the evolving needs of key stakeholders.