2026

CFLEADS ECONOMIC MOBILITY

POST-SUMMIT SUMMARY



CFLeads

Community Foundations
Leading Change

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Executive Summary

The CFLeads Economic Mobility Summit received 133 registrations representing 33 community foundations, many private and family foundations, their government and community partners, and inspiring speakers to illuminate the theme of "Paving Pathways" in Fort Worth, Texas.

In partnership with the North Texas Community Foundation, CFLeads curated a unique gathering from July 28-30 which reflected the belief that systems-level change doesn't happen by accident, but is rather co-created through aligned vision, shared responsibility, and community-driven action.

Starting with a welcome reception, the Summit accomplished objectives to foster connections, strengthen peer exchange, and provide space to share promising practices to advance economic mobility outcomes and resident engagement. The strategically designed agenda included a keynote from Geoffrey Canada, plenaries from Dr. Russell Booker and Jennifer Blatz, and 12 breakout sessions with technical assistance providers or real examples from community.

The Summit ended with a site visit around Fort Worth presented by the North Texas Community Foundation and partners which amplified the lessons learned throughout the sessions. Survey results glowed and reflected the positive feedback which attendees continue to echo.



CFLeads believes that...

community foundations play a critical role in building communities where everyone has the opportunity to thrive. On the heels of the Economic Mobility Action Network, CFLeads convened leaders from across the country for the 2026 Economic Mobility Summit: Paving Pathways – a dynamic, gathering focused on advancing lasting, place-based change.

Set in Fort Worth, TX, a city that reflects both deep history and strong community-driven initiatives, the Summit brought together practitioners, funders, and thought-partners committed to strengthening economic mobility through collaboration, connection, and shared learning. Grounded in the theme Paving Pathways, the Summit highlighted the unique role community foundations play as connectors – bridging residents, funders, and cross-sector partners to move from insight to action.

In its economic mobility efforts, CFLeads uses Urban Institute's three-part definition and defines economic mobility as the ability of people to improve their economic status, have power and autonomy over their lives, and be engaged in and valued by their community.

This event was made possible in partnership with CFLeads' generous supporters and friends:

- **North Texas Community Foundation, Co-Host and Reception Sponsor**
- **Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, Travel Stipend Sponsor**
- **eCratchit Nonprofit, Contributing Sponsor**
- **Mary L. Thomas, Contributing Sponsor**
- **CFLeads Investors**

CFLeads' Economic Mobility Evolution

2019
Field Survey

Economic Mobility identified as a key priority

2020
EMAN Pilot

CFLeads launched the two-year pilot Economic Mobility Action Network with six Community Foundations and funded by the Gates Foundation with additional support from the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation

2022
EMAN Capstone

CFLeads' EMAN Pilot sunset with a capstone event, report, and video sharing lessons learned

2023
Funding Received

In November 2023, CFLeads received additional funding from the Gates Foundation to build on EMAN Pilot Success

2023-24
Field Conversations

CFLeads completed field conversations to identify economic mobility challenges and opportunity and kick off programming in 2024 with additional staff and new CEO

2024
Regional Convenings

CFLeads hosts 4 Economic Mobility Regional Convenings between April and September

2024
EMAN Cohorts

Launch of two, 12-month EMAN cohorts comprised of 10 community foundations each, following extensive outreach and interview process

2024
Webinars

Gathering of thought partners and content experts to share resources through virtual platforms

2025
EMAN Cohorts

Completion of the EMAN cohorts and emphasis on reporting

2026
Reporting

Publishing of a culminating report, 19 unique case studies, and cohort capstone video to share narratives, lessons learned, and impact

2026
EM Summit

CFLeads' hosts an Economic Mobility Summit amplifying EMAN work, growing peer connections, and highlighting technical assistance providers

Adapted from CFLeads' 2024 Economic Mobility Mid-Point Report, Pathways to Progress.

Paving Pathways

The agenda formation was strategically formatted to include theory, research, and practice of economic mobility approaches for community foundations and their partners. Through relationship equity and field credibility, every speaker requested answered the call to present for this unique audience.



Tuesday, July 28

Informal time to connect began on the evening of Tuesday, July 28 with a welcome reception at Wines From A Broad complete with light bites and opening remarks from CFLeads, North Texas Community Foundation, and a local community partner and instrumental supporter in the summit planning.

Wednesday, July 29

The first full day of the Summit kicked off with an inspiring keynote address from Geoffrey Canada, Harlem Children's Zone before attendees were invited to choose a breakout session. Following the opening was an emphasis on resources and practical application.

Transformation Built from Within: **LIFT JAX** and **Northside Voyagers**

Lasting neighborhood transformation is most powerful when it begins with the people who already call a community home. This session explored how resident leadership, authentic partnerships, and strategic philanthropy can work together to catalyze equitable revitalization that builds on a neighborhood's existing strengths rather than replacing them.

Understanding the Unique Context of Economic Mobility in Your City or Region: **Common Good Labs** Part One

This highly interactive workshop gave each participant customized data for their city or region that highlighted unique local barriers to economic mobility and specific local opportunities. It will also include information on recent historical patterns as well as points of comparison with peer communities for types of levers that have succeeded.

10 Ways Community Foundations are Driving Systems Change: **FSG**

Designed for community foundation leaders and staff, this session explored ten practical approaches for advancing meaningful, sustainable impact through systems change, along with actionable tactics that can be implemented through grantmaking, staff leadership, and the strategic use of relationships, convening power, and institutional platforms. The content was rooted in real-world examples from the field, and participants had opportunities to engage in individual reflection as well as small- and whole-group sensemaking.

A New Theory of Local Government: **PolicyLink**

For generations, local governments have been asked to deliver services, while community foundations have been asked to fill the gaps those services leave behind. But what if both institutions share a larger democratic purpose? The Fourteenth Amendment offers a constitutional framework for reimagining local governance—not simply as the administration of public services, but as the everyday implementation of the Constitution's promise of equal protection. This session explored the opportunity for local government and philanthropy to become co-architects of a new model of democratic governance because together, local governments and community foundations can demonstrate what Governing for All looks like in practice.

Wednesday, July 29

Sync Sessions were CFLeads' iteration of an existing conference offering where structured time for Summit participants is amplified to grow connections and shared learning. Groups met twice during the Summit for structured time and discussion guides were available for download and as a tool for self-led discussion.

Attendees gathered back for lunch and were welcomed into conversation about the inspiring work happening in Spartanburg, SC with a fireside chat between CFLeads' President & CEO, Mary L. Thomas and Dr. Russell Booker, CEO, Spartanburg Academic Movement.



The second round of breakout sessions hosted space for topic specific presentations or continuation of the morning focus.

Investing in Main Street: How Two Community Foundations launched their **Impact Investing** Journey

Moderated by Amanda Hartigan, Senior Director of Programs, Strategy, and Culture at CFLeads, Simeon Bannister, President and CEO of **Rochester Area Community Foundation**, and Shaun Floerke, President and CEO of **Boreal Waters Community Foundation**, joined together for a fireside chat to share stories of early successes, big challenges, and lessons learned as they've launched their community foundations into the world of impact investing. Participants learned about the path each foundation took to their initial impact investments and how they've made the case for impact investing as a tool for community leadership.

Neighborhood Revitalization Tailored to Your Community: How to Prevent Displacement and Create Inclusive Prosperity: **Common Good Labs** Part Two

Part Two with Common Good Labs and the Brookings Institution shared what patterns observed in thousands of U.S. neighborhoods reveal about how foundation leaders can prevent displacement and increase economic mobility in the local communities where they work.

From Barriers to Belonging: Workforce Strategies for Underserved, Low-Skill Citizens with **YAMTEP**

Reliable, flat-rate transportation removes the most persistent barrier to attendance, completion, and employment—strengthening equity across the workforce pipeline. Participants explored how YAMTEP's integrated workforce model supports low-skill and no-skill residents through accessible training, employer-aligned curriculum, and structured youth and adult pathways. Additionally, this session presented how employer partnerships drive curriculum design, job placement, and long-term retention, creating a responsive ecosystem that meets regional labor needs.

Beyond the Grant: Aligning Capital, Policy, and Place to Advance Economic Mobility with **Living Cities**

In this interactive workshop, Living Cities President and CEO Joe Scantlebury shared lessons from more than 35 years of partnering with cities, philanthropy, financial institutions, and community leaders to advance place-based change. Rather than focusing on a single model or case study, participants worked through a practical framework to assess the conditions in their own communities, identify opportunities to better align capital and policy, and explore strategies for strengthening cross-sector collaboration. Attendees left with actionable tools and ideas they can adapt to help build a more inclusive economy in their own communities.

Wednesday, July 29

Before the final session, attendees were welcomed to engage in unstructured networking time in an exhibitor area for exploration of the many Technical Assistance (TA) providers in attendance to gain additional insight before after their breakout session.

Day one wrapped with a Round Robin presentation of three community foundations at different stages in their economic mobility journeys. Amanda Hartigan facilitated a discussion of lessons learned with Cambridge Community Foundation, Wayne County Community Foundation, and Greater Houston Community Foundation.



Thursday, July 30

Day two started off strong with an introduction of the plenary, Jennifer Blatz from CFLeads' Dr. Leonard Brock who shares a long connection with StriveTogether's work.

The final round of breakouts fostered space for local work and TA providers with data to support place-based approaches.

Sync sessions continued to be a positive experience as groups grabbed lunch before sitting down for reflections and ideation with their groups.

The afternoon continued the theme of showcasing local examples of systems change work with an economic mobility approach with a panel of Fort Woth leaders including city government, construction lead from the business sector, and a nonprofit lead, facilitated by Dr. Whitnee Boyd from North Texas Community Foundation. Attendees who had additional time before their flights were welcomed to attend a site-visit of Fort Worth were seven organizations shared how they work together to promote upward mobility of resident with cross sector partnerships and amplifying resident voice.

The Whova app proved to be a worthwhile investment that provided easy access to the agenda, Summit FAQs, and a place for discussion which even led to an impromptu dinner of community foundation colleagues.



Investing in Permanent Affordability through the **Community Land Trust Model**

Participants learned about the basic tenants of the Community Land Trust (CLT) model and heard the origin story and current progress for the Fort Worth CLT. Key topics included the importance of collaboration across public/private partnerships, the role of stable housing in economic mobility, organizational sustainability and investment strategy and the importance of community input and collaboration.

Resident Experts: Building Toward Economic Mobility Together with **Organizer Zero** and **Parent Shield**

This panel of resident experts from Fort Worth showcased how philanthropy and residents can best work together for the change we all desire. Mental models and framing for considering the continuum of resident engagement, along with useful tips for co-creating with the communities that stand to gain the most from daily efforts were presented.

Money Matters: Community Foundations Increasing Economic Mobility through Tax- and Revenue-linked Strategies with **Tax Equity Funders**

As states and localities face growing fiscal pressures and communities confront potential cuts to critical health, human service, and education programs, funders have an opportunity to think differently about impact. This session presented how to work on tax equity, tax-based strategies and revenue to multiply the impact of existing investments, put more resources into the hands of families, and create lasting pathways to economic mobility.

Anchoring Local Change: How Community Foundations can Drive Economic Mobility with **Results for America** and **Urban Institute**

This interactive session equipped community foundation leaders with practical tools to help guide place-based economic mobility initiatives amidst an evolving national landscape. Participants explored publicly available resources from the Urban Institute and Results for America, along with real-world examples of how community foundations have effectively mobilized local action and measured progress. Through a guided reflection and breakout groups, attendees surfaced common challenges and problem-solve collaboratively with their peers.

Recommendations for the Field

CFLeads has a unique field position to hear from Community Foundations across the nation, their partners, and national funders considering place-based work and systems. As connections grew, several key items were affirmed throughout this Summit which are also present throughout the field information summarized in CFLeads' Issues of Interest report .

Individually, we work to deliver tools and resources to local leaders across the country.

With an economic mobility lens, this Summit raised three guiding lights for the field .

1. **It takes long-term, operational resources to move this type of work.**
2. **Systems change work doesn't happen overnight.**
3. **Community foundations fill many different roles.**

Broken down, we can see that trust-based funding, patience with time, and clarity of roles are all necessary to move economic mobility strategies in place-based communities. Instead of piece-meal funding and a sense of urgency with no anchor or agreed upon expectations, systems change work happens when community foundations shift from a grantmaking model and isolation mindset to working in cross-sector partnerships. This shift aims to break silos and perpetual problems at the root cause.

For CFLeads, this starts with crafting collaborative convenings and sharing of knowledge or frameworks that can be right sized to each unique community and community foundation role.

Survey Results

100% of survey responses rated the overall Economic Mobility Summit:

- Excellent or Good
- Very Relevant or Somewhat Relevant to their organization's work
- Strongly Agree or Agree that they gained knowledge in the content area

What this means:

- CFLeads brought in the right speakers, the right audience, and the right content

What responses said:

> We are not in this work by ourselves. We found our people!

> Emphasized the importance of building relationships across sectors and with residents.

> Trust is everything and it takes time. Better get started!!!

> The networking CFLeads does is remarkable.

> Consult with peers across the country in various stages of the work.

> Addressing the five leadership competencies and how they can be applied across different organizational and community contexts is valuable.

What this means:

- CFLeads accomplished the objectives and theme, "Paving Pathways" and can continue to amplify community leadership approaches and programming for the field.



Connect with us!

CFLeads is a national network with a mission to help community foundations build strong communities by advancing effective practices, sharing knowledge and galvanizing action on critical issues of our time.

Interested in learning more about other CFLeads programming? There are several easy ways to stay in touch with CFLeads. Sign up for our newsletter and connect with us on LinkedIn or Facebook to learn about the latest program offerings and events.

Interested in supporting this work even further? Contact us to learn how to become an Investor.

CFLeads

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info@cfleads.org
www.cfleads.org