Missouri Collaborative on Firearms Research Planning Day Report
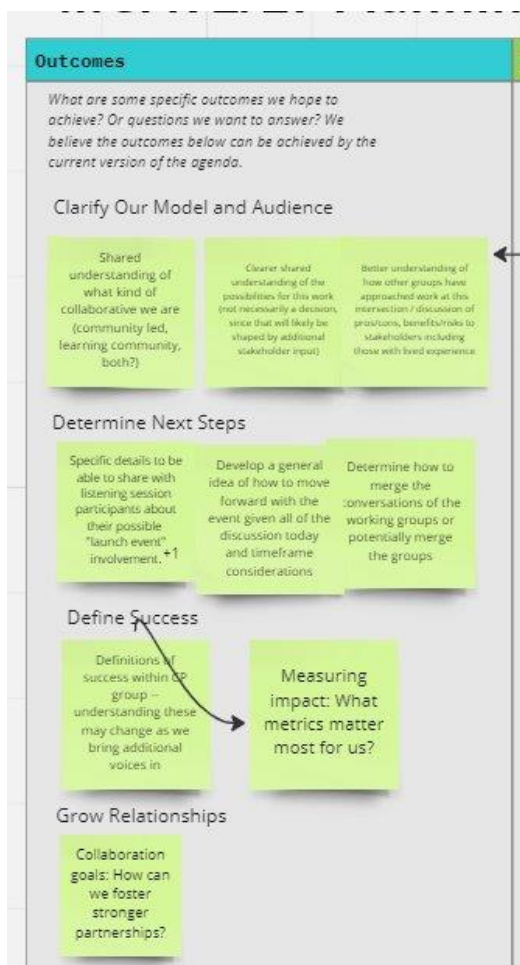
February 2024

On February 27, 2024, nine representatives from the founding partner organizations associated with the Missouri Collaborative on Firearms Research (MCFR) met for a day of continued strategic planning. The group included representatives from Missouri Foundation for Health, St. Louis Regional Health Commission, Community Partnership of the Ozarks, Washington University in St. Louis, and the University of Missouri. The event was hosted by Missouri Foundation for Health and facilitated by Openfields with support from Bold Ventures and Keys to Knowledge and Action, LLC.

The goals of the planning day included:

+   Exploring various collaborative models and their implications on MCFR governance and decision making and clarifying MCFR's audience and activities
+   Defining what success in the next few months would look like and identifying any specific metrics the collaborative would like to seek or track
+   Strengthen and grow relationships with MCFR
+   Identifying concrete next steps for the collaborative

AGENDA

The agenda for the day included:

+ **Points of Process**
  Brief review of fist-to-five and our current RAPID model; partner representatives decide on how those in the room today will address decision-making with those absent.

+ **Exploration of Collaborative Models and Clarifying MCFR's Audience and Activities**
  Bold Ventures will facilitate a conversation about various models that MCFR can pursue to meet its aim to foster community-led, evidence-driven action to reduce firearm injury and death.

+ **Understanding the Implications of MCFR's Collaborative Model**
  During this session, Bold Ventures will lead a conversation about the implications of the models discussed during the first session on the development of MCFR's governance and decision making.

+ **Defining Success**
  What does success look like in the next 4 months? Are there any specific metrics we want to seek or track?

+ **Discussion of Community Engagement Listening Sessions & Kickoff Presentation by KKA, LLC**

+ **Final Words and Affirmations**

DECISIONS

- ✓ Fist-to-five vote initiated and PASSED to move forward with decision-making with the current core partner (CP) group represented. Missing PC representative will have the opportunity to share feedback around decisions. When possible, decisions can be subject to modification. If decisions require immediate attention or action, there may not be room for modification.
- ✓ Fist-to-five vote initiated and PASSED to explore and test the learning community model outlined on 2/27 that includes MCFR activities in the areas of Skills Building, Education and Readiness, Collaboration and Influence, and Research.


OTHER AGREEMENTS + NEXT STEPS

- + Core partners agreed to meet prior to the next scheduled CEC meeting to follow-up on planning day and actionable next steps.
- + Short-term goals for the next 4 months were identified. Collaborative to work on further refining and adapting goals into the SMART framework.

Activity Reports

Brief review of fist-to-five and our current RAPID model; partner representatives to decide on how those in the room today will address decision-making with those absent.

In this session, participants reviewed fist-to-five consensus decision making method and the current RAPID model. Openfields highlighted "Strategies, Goals, Tactics" and "Activities" as the two active areas for decisions today. We discussed the importance of checking in throughout the day on whether Core Partners felt a need to involve other stakeholders from the "parking lot" in making decisions about activities.
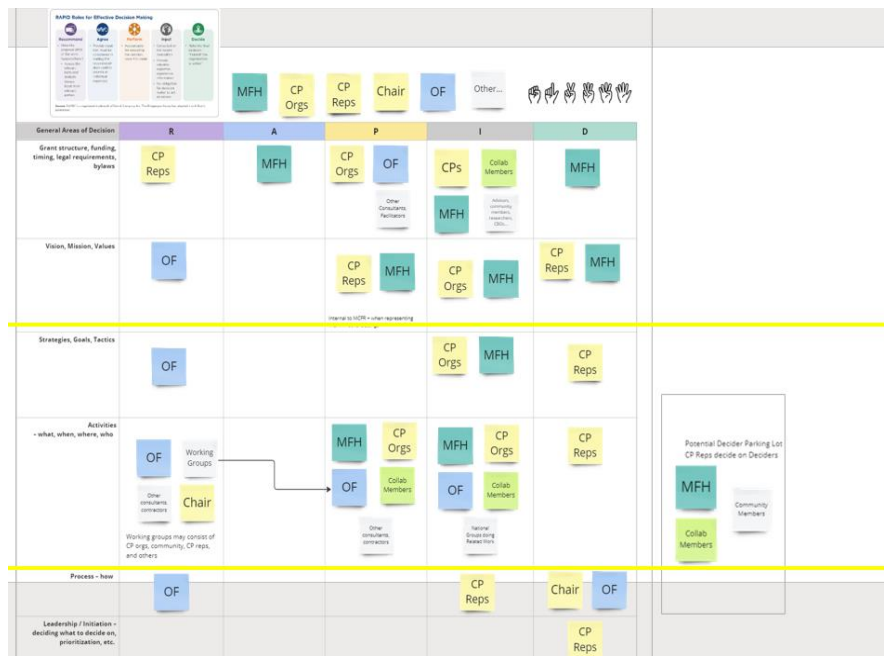
Participants were prompted with two process decisions to discuss and vote on to move forward with how to handle decision-making when a core partner representative is absent. The two prompts *were 1). How will we handle decisions today with one partner organization (St. Louis Area Violence Prevention Commission) not represented and 2.) How will we handle decisions today after a partner representative has to leave?* After discussion, the Chair and Co-Chair called to vote on how process decisions would be made during the planning day.

Process Question	Process Decision
How will we handle decisions today with one partner organization (St. Louis Area Violence Prevention Commission) not represented?	The CP group that is present will make decisions today. We will acknowledge which decisions are urgent (need to be acted on now) vs. longer term and open to revision. Missing CP representative will have an opportunity to review decisions upon their return and register agreement or reservation. Any decisions that they have reservations about will be subject to modification when possible. Upon return, we will discuss and decide how we want to handle this type of scenario in the future. (PASSED)
How will we handle decisions today after a partner representative has to leave?	In the absence of some core partner representatives, remaining representatives will be 'authorized' to vote on behalf of their organization this afternoon. (PASSED)

- ✓ Fist-to-five vote initiated and PASSED to move forward with decision-making with the current core partner (CP) group represented. Missing CP representative will have the opportunity to share feedback around decisions. When possible, decisions can be subject to modification. If decisions require immediate attention or action, there may not be room for modification.
- ✓ Fist-to-five vote initiated and PASSED to explore and test the learning community model outlined on 2/27 that includes MCFR activities in the areas of Skills Building, Education and Readiness, Collaboration and Influence, and Research.

EXPLORATION OF COLLABORATIVE MODELS AND CLARIFYINF MCFR'S AUDIENCE AND ACTIVITIES & RESPONSIBILITIES
Bold Ventures will facilitate a conversation about various models that MCFR can pursue to meet its aim to foster community-led, evidence-driven action to reduce firearm injury and death.

In this session, facilitated by Bold Ventures, participants reviewed three approaches to collaborative models (a learning community and two community/research partnerships) and discussed which model or models best aligns to carry out MCFR activities and goals moving forward. In a paired activity, groups were asked to reflect and respond to guiding questions posted around the room. Sticky notes were left by each guiding question for pairs to write down their reflections. The following responses were collected from the sticky notes posted around the room.

Among the current organizations participating in MCFR, which collaborative models are best suited for their capacity and engagement?

- + Community partnership & learning community
- + How do we even start thinking about this? What questions do we need to ask ourselves?
- + MFH not set up to be able to create and sustain relationships w/ indiv who are not connected to orgs/inst.
    - o ...able to support, convene, etc. org-affiliated work or work at research/CBO levels

Who does MCFR primarily aim to serve or engage (researchers, community orgs, impacted communities) and which model (learning community, research space, or a combination) would best support their engagement with MCFR?

- + Combination
- + 1st engage researchers with some level of buy-in
- + "Place the oxygen mask on researcher's first"
    - o * Unless we want to completely upend how research and evidence generation is done
- + Researcher practice and mental models --> CBO relationships and collab --> Comms impacted
- + Learning community --> improve practices --> better relationships, more equitable practice --> actual research --> better outcomes

What are the current needs of researchers and community organizations that will support them to build and sustain equitable partnerships for addressing firearm injury and death? How can MCFR support bridging these needs?

- + Having space to brainstorm ideas
- + Relationship is the outcome (vs. Specific research outcomes); changing perceptions of success
- + Grant funding/different funding structures, tech assistance, resources, coaches
- + CBOs juggling many activities and priorities; may not have time to do this themselves; need supportive partners with skills and desire to share power
- + Mechanisms of accountability
- + Time
- + Money and space
- + Researchers and CBOS could both improve ability to identify own power and engage with equity
- + Skills building on researchers to engage community in all phases; how to truly power share

What activities should MCFR pursue that are not currently available for MCFR's primary audience?

- + Challenge institutional practice (not just indiv orientation)

+ Teaching humility, empathy, and what might be needed to show up in community (for researchers) + Space for people to get together to think/work on power issues + FID power building (may be scary for institutions who don't want to give up control) + Provide resource, toolkits, money + Ensuring community trauma and secondary trauma (in researcher) is addressed and cared for + No space where community dictates needs/direction (all still driven/initiated by orgs/institutions + Challenge funding orgs to practice community driven work and power sharing + Building a community or network so people don't feel alone in this difficult work
What opportunities currently exist for community-engaged research led by impacted communities throughout Missouri? Where does MCFR see opportunities to contribute uniquely, and what gaps could it aim to fill?
+ Potential opportunities to get feedback on current strategies + Current exists -> limited opportunity to react to research ideas formed by academic researchers + RHC community IRB + Robert Wood Johnson funded projects- several in MO + Funding resources to do work + TBD. Some work getting closer but unclear whether community led work is happening + Change mental models of who could be a "researcher" or what types of evidence is "valid" or "worthy" + MCFR could fund/support relationships. Allow researchers and communities to build trust outside of a specific project

See Appendix below for full Bold Ventures report and summary findings.

UNDERSTANDING THE IMPLICATIONS OF MCFR'S COLLABORATIVE MODEL
During this session, Bold Ventures will lead a conversation about the implications of the models discussed during the first session on the development of MCFR's governance and decision making.

After deeper review of the prior activity, Bold Ventures generated a draft MCFR model built from the collected responses and shared it with the represented core partner team. The model identified the four key areas of *Skills Building, Education & Readiness, Collaboration & Influence, and Research* as being instrumental in supporting MCFR in carrying out its mission to foster community-led, evidence-driven action to reduce firearm injury. *See Bold Ventures Appendix for full summary report and findings.*

MCFR Model

MCFR rosters community-led, evidence-driven action to reduce firearm injury and death. We do this by building relationships, emaining, research, and generating evidence.

The group participated in facilitated discussion with Openfields to identify what it would look like to explore and test this learning community model in the coming months. The group brainstormed and offered several criteria that would support them in exploring and testing this model.

Explore	*working with it and within it; find out what is already out there re:community perceptions of research and barriers; learn about and map the system; information gathering and learning; potential prototyping*
Test	*get input/agreement from STLVPC; listen to community to identify where community aligns or does not align with this model; further define what activities are part of each of the model "buckets" and reconfirm our alignment with each bucket; check in periodically on how the way we are operationalizing this model is aligning with our mission*

Finally, the group called a fist-to-five vote that in the coming months, they will explore and test the learning community model outlined that includes MCFR activities in the areas of Skills Building, Education and Readiness, Collaboration and Influence, and Research.

✓ Fist-to-five vote PASSED to explore and test the draft learning community model over the coming months.

What does success look like in the next 4 months? Are there any specific metrics we want to seek or track?

After voting to explore and test the learning community model, Openfields prompted the group to begin thinking about what markers of success would look like in the next 4 months. The group was asked to consider what signs of success would demonstrate that MCFR is on its way to living out its vision and mission. The following prompt was given to help guide reflection: *If we [do], ___ between now and June 30, MCFR will be well on its way toward fulfilling its mission*.

Participants had a few minutes to reflect independently and write down their ideas. After several minutes, individuals shared out in two small groups and were tasked with writing out five short-term goals they would like to see MCFR accomplish in the coming months. The two groups shared their five items and together categorized the ten goals based on likeness and narrowed it down to 5 goals:

1. Define and Build Member Relationships
2. Establish Our Model
3. Identify Alignment with Existing Initiatives
4. Learn from Community and Apply to Model
5. Foster and Relationships.
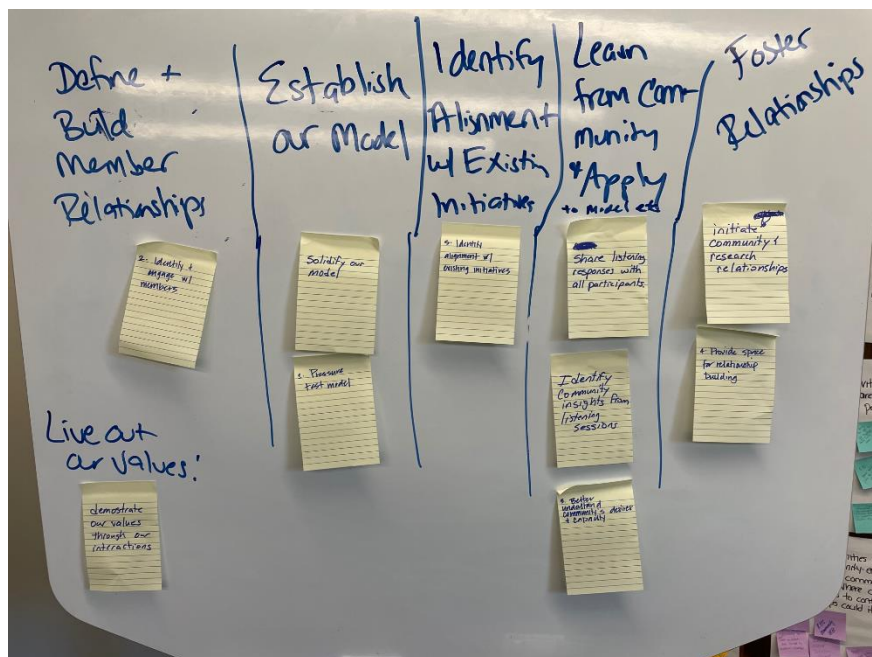
DISCUSSION OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT LISTENING SESSIONS AND KICKOFF PRESENTATION BY KKA, LLC

Before working groups dispersed to begin conversation, a few participants within the launch event working group shared a need for further clarity and understanding around upcoming community listening due to its direct implications on a planned spring event. Without more clarity around community listening, the group felt it difficult to move forward with planning. Core partners decided not to split into working groups but participate as a full group in the kickoff presentation presented by Darius.

During the kickoff presentation, Darius shared his vision and approach for community engagement strategy and posed several important questions for the full group's consideration. Questions centered around the purpose of listening sessions, what questions were important to ask, who is MCFR listening too, and what ultimately is MCFR listening for. These key questions surfaced challenging but important tensions around MCFR's current capacity and what and where current relationships are held. Through this discussion, core partners indicated that the current draft model may be best suited to prioritize engaging with researchers or community-based organizations as a first step to listening before going directly to impacted communities.

FINAL WORDS AND AFFIRMATIONS

After a long day of deep work and challenging questions, MCFR core partners in partnership with Openfields, Bold Ventures, and Darius Rucker reflected on how they are feeling about the future of MCFR. Participants shared in feelings of excitement, hopefulness, trusting the process, productive tensions, and eagerness for what is to come.

Summary: Exploration of Collaborative Models to Clarify MCFR's Audience & Activities

In February 2024, during the MCFR Planning Day, Bold Ventures facilitated a conversation about the various models that MCFR can pursue to meet its aim of fostering community-led, evidence-driven action to reduce firearm injury and death. During the conversation, we reviewed three approaches to collaborative models (a learning community and two community/research partnerships) and developed a model that MCFR will pursue moving forward. The decision to pursue the model was codified through a 'fist-to-five' voting process, with all core partners showing support for advancing the chosen model. This document describes the conversation that led to this decision as well as the model chosen by MCFR.

CASE STUDIES

Before the meeting, Bold Ventures presented three collaborative models: a learning community model, the Gun Violence Prevention Learning Collaborative for Health Systems and Hospitals, along with two community/research partnerships, namely the Center for Community Health Partnership and Research (CCHPR) and the Collaborative for Criminal and Juvenile Justice Priorities (CCJJP). During the discussion, MCFR members provided the following feedback on the case studies, highlighting opportunities to integrate community engagement into the model they will pursue.

- **Community Engagement:** MCFR members are committed to prioritizing community engagement in their model and discussed the need to integrate community engagement activities throughout the research process to ensure the inclusion of community needs and voices.
- **Adapting Engagement Strategies:** As the nature and makeup of communities change, so should MCFR's approaches to engaging with them, making sure inclusivity and relevance are maintained.
- **Creating Joint Decision-Making Mechanisms:** It's beneficial to establish spaces where community input and researcher expertise meet equally. This balance ensures the research agenda is scientifically robust and anchored in community perspectives.
- **Building a Learning Community Among Researchers and Institutions:** Focus on forming a group where researchers and institutions can learn how to address institutional barriers to community-led research. The aim is to adjust power dynamics internally, making it easier for communities to have a co-leading role in research rather than adjusting to external systems.

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

Using a small group activity, core partners responded to 6 questions that can support them to further define the audience and activities of their work. These reflections were captured in writing during the meeting and are summarized below.

- **Among the current organizations participating in MCFR, which collaborative models are best suited for their capacity and engagement?**
  - While the core partners of MCFR initially **found it challenging** to address this question, they ultimately engaged in a thoughtful discussion and **agreed** on the formation of a **learning community** at this stage. Recognizing that by focusing on **achieving broader institutional objectives**, they can pave the way for more **community-led research** as they progress toward their **fourth pillar of activities**. There is still a need for **further clarity regarding roles**; however, they concluded that MCFR will **blend elements** of both a learning community and a community/research collaborative **as it progresses**.
- **Who does MCFR primarily aim to serve or engage (researchers, community organizations, impacted communities) and which model (learning community, research space, or a combination) would best support their engagement with MCFR?**
  - Core partners indicated that MCFR aims to serve **researchers** and **community organizations**, focusing on those interested in **CBPR**. They advocate for starting with a **learning community model** to solve **institutional problems, improve practices**, and **achieve better outcomes** through **equitable practices** and **actual research**. The emphasis is on **"placing the oxygen mask on researchers first"** to fundamentally change research and evaluation practices, with the aim of benefiting both **researcher practices** and **community relationships**, ultimately supporting the **communities impacted.**
- **What are the current needs of researchers and community organizations that will support them to build and sustain equitable partnerships for addressing firearm injury and death? How can MCFR support in bridging these needs?**
  - Core partners mentioned **spaces for ideation, redefining success metrics** towards **relationship-building**, access to **diverse funding** and **technical resources**, support for CBOs to **manage multiple priorities** with **skilled partners,** mechanisms for **accountability**, enhancing awareness of **power dynamics for equity,** and **skill development** for researchers in **community engagement**. MCFR's role is seen in **bridging these needs** through facilitating **brainstorming platforms, funding support, technical assistance, promoting power sharing**, and offering training focused on equitable engagement practices.
- **What activities should MCFR pursue that are not currently available for MCFR's primary audience?**
  - Core partners suggested a variety of activities for MCFR that are currently lacking for its primary audience, including **challenging institutional practices** and emphasizing the importance of teaching **humility, empathy,** and the necessary

attitudes for engaging with communities. There's a call for **funding and support mechanisms** that prioritize relationship building over strict project timelines and the creation of spaces dedicated to discussing and working on power issues. Members pointed out the need for **FID power building**, acknowledging the potential discomfort it might cause in institutions reluctant to relinquish control. Addressing **trauma** experienced by researchers and providing **resources, toolkits, and financial support** to community organizations were highlighted. Additionally, the importance of building a **community or network** to support individuals in this demanding work was mentioned, along with the lack of spaces where the **community can outright dictate its needs and direction**. Finally, there was a consensus on the need to **challenge funding organizations** to favor **community-driven work** and **power sharing**.

- **What opportunities currently exist for community-engaged research led by impacted communities throughout Missouri? Where does MCFR see opportunities to contribute uniquely, and what gaps could it aim to fill?**
    a. Opportunities for community-engaged research led by impacted communities across Missouri include **RHC Community IRB** and **potential feedback mechanisms** like CAB and barometer efforts. There is an existing opportunity to **react to research ideas** formed by academic researchers, with **RWJ funded projects** presenting several opportunities within the state. **Funding resources** are available for such work, highlighting the need to **change mental models** regarding who is considered a "researcher" and what evidence is deemed "valid" or "worthy." MCFR has the potential to **fund/support relationships** and enable researchers and communities to build trust beyond specific projects. The suggestion to **make funds and resources available** to all levels of communities, community organizations, and various types of researchers points to a broad approach. However, there's an observation that, while some work is nearing the goal, it remains **TBD** whether truly **community-led** work is happening.

MCFR MODEL

Skills Building	**Education & Readiness**	**Collaboration & Influence**	**Research**
to strengthen the practice of community engaged & led research among academic institutions and community organizations.	to build the ability of practitioners to engage in conversation and practices that address power & identity in the current systems.	to shift practices that enhance the ability of institutions to engage in community-led, evidence-driven research.	to model practices that are community-led and focused on reducing firearm injury and death.

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The MCFR core partners identified four pillars as the implementation pathway for achieving their mission:

- **Skills Building**
    - **Objective:** To strengthen the practice of community-engaged & community-led research among academic institutions and community organizations.
    - **Implementation:** Developing comprehensive training modules, workshops, and collaborative learning spaces that equip researchers with the necessary tools and methodologies to conduct research that is both engaging and led by the community. This approach enhances research practices that are intrinsically aligned with community needs, emphasizing the importance of community voices throughout the research process.
- **Education & Readiness**
    - **Objective:** To build the ability of practitioners to engage in conversation and practices that address power & identity in the current systems.
    - **Implementation:** Offering seminars, workshops, and discussion forums that delve into the dynamics of power and identity, empowering practitioners with the insights needed to conduct equitable and respectful research. This bucket fosters a deep understanding and readiness to navigate complex interactions within research and community engagement effectively.
- **Collaboration & Influence**
    - **Objective:** To shift towards practices that enhance the ability of institutions and community organizations to engage in community-led, evidence-driven research.
    - **Implementation:** This involves forging robust partnerships between academic institutions, community organizations, and other stakeholders, aiming to foster an

environment conducive to mutual learning and influence. Advocating for policy changes and showcasing successful models of community-led research are key strategies. In this context, leveraging institutional power and influence drives systemic change, creating a landscape where collaborative efforts lead to meaningful impacts on research practices and outcomes.

- **Research**
    - **Objective:** To model practices that are community-led and focused on reducing firearm injury and death.
    - **Implementation:** Conducting and supporting research projects that adhere to community leadership principles, with a direct focus on reducing firearm-related harm.

OPEN QUESTIONS

During our conversation, core partners raised the following questions that dive deeper into the direction of their work going forward. These were documented to be revisited during future discussions.

- What is the community's perspective on barriers?
- How can we understand the capacity of community organizations and how they would like to be engaged? (Focusing on questions that have not already been answered previously.)
- What would it take for (community) to feel valued or like your engagement was meaningful/powerful?
- Understanding the difference between community-led vs community focused–How do they move through the spectrum?
- How do we engage and vet individuals/organizations that would want to participate in this work?
- What is our goal in influencing the current funding structures? Should we create a space to create a different structure or influence current ones, or both.
- Where is the individual and institutional power to do this work?
- How do we leverage connections as we learn as a group?

NEXT STEPS

- **Analyze the Current Landscape**
    - MCFR will do a comprehensive analysis of the current landscape, with a dual focus on identifying what already exists and pinpointing opportunities for strategic engagement. This requires MCFR to map out the ecosystem within which they operate, assessing existing resources, initiatives, and gaps. Through this lens, we'll strategize on leveraging institutional power and influence to amplify MCFR's impact, either by enhancing what works or by filling in the gaps.
- **Identify Governance Models from Learning Collaboratives**

- ○ Bold Ventures will research and identify effective governance models with analogous challenges and successes, analyze their governance structures, and document actionable insights. We will then facilitate discussions with MCFR to deliberate on the adaptability of these models to support MCFR's mission of driving community-led, evidence-driven research.
- **Testing and Implementing the Model**
  - ○ MCFR will put the model into action, assess its effectiveness in real-world settings, and make necessary adjustments based on feedback and outcomes.