

KDK-Harman Foundation: Theory of Change

Revised: June 2011

This white paper details the Theory of Change (TOC) for the KDK-Harman Foundation (“KDK”). The TOC depicts the inputs, processes, outputs, and outcomes associated with KDK and its grantmaking efforts. In sum, KDK’s TOC articulates the organization’s strategy of accomplishing its desired change, “*..to inspire educational success, financial independence and life-long learning and service.*” This paper identifies the preconditions that will enable (and possibly inhibit) each step, lists the activities that will produce those conditions and explains why those activities are likely to be successful. KDK’s logic models are directly derived from its TOC.

Theory of Change format is as follows:

- Vision and Mission Statements
- Assumptions
- Target Groups
- Strategies
- Outcomes
- Additional Reflections

Vision

Our vision is to inspire educational success and life-long learning. We focus on:

- serving economically disadvantaged Central Texas students and their families to help them achieve educational success;
- transforming their lives from poverty to financial independence and enabling a better life for future generations;
- providing financial and capacity building resources to education focused nonprofits, schools and collaborations; and
- creating a culture of giving excellence in our community through leadership, high-engagement, advocacy and innovation.

Breaking the cycle of poverty through education.

– KDK-Harman tagline

Mission

Our mission is to break the cycle of poverty through education while promoting a culture of giving excellence.

KDK-Harman funds academic programs that assist economically disadvantaged students and their families.

--This is the basis which KDK funds programs.

Categorically speaking, KDK funds in the following areas:

- K-12 Education
 - Elementary
 - Middle School
 - High School

Assumptions

- Education is the great equalizer and the civil and human rights issue of our time. Through education, the cycle of poverty can be broken.
- Philanthropic giving in the US to public schools constitutes a small fraction of the total amount of public money spent. One recent estimate places all private grantmaking to support K-12 public education at under \$2 billion, while the total expenditure from all local, state and federal sources is \$500 billion.¹ Therefore, KDK-Harman Foundation seeks to make wise grant decisions that will achieve the greatest leverage and help the most students to benefit from our grantmaking.
- KDK opts to work with best-in-class non-profit organizations and schools at a variety of levels, as we believe that tackling immediate needs of individual students and schools should be balanced with longer-term investments in capacity building and policy change. We seek to support individual achievement (students) and cultivate influential individuals (teachers or principals), but we also hope to strengthen organizations (schools, school districts, or the nonprofits that work with them), through organizational development and capacity building. Finally, we believe there is great value in influencing networks through convening groups and collaborations; and we seek to influence education policy through statewide advocacy and public-will-building.
- We also believe that our grantmaking is most effective by working both inside and outside of the system. At our core, we believe that those closest to the teaching and learning process have the best idea of where the problems lie, and how to solve them. We also believe that most schools and districts are on the right track—they just don't have the resources or organizational capacity to do what they need to do. However, we also seek to support outside actors collaborating with those on the inside to deliver programs since they are less hampered by restrictions and more flexible, and sometimes easier to access and work with.

- If we want our students to excel academically, explore careers, and develop the 21st century skills necessary to thrive in today’s global society, we need to start thinking and talking about education differently by re-imagining how, when, and where young people learn. We believe that the current school structure has limitations to providing 21st century learning experiences to students, and that taking advantage of out-of-school learning time, integrating technology into learning, and incorporating student-centric learning into in-school time is critical to meeting students where they are.
- We recognize our limitations in determining the impact of our grants on our target population, and that many exogenous factors to student achievement exist in our work.

What is the problem KDK-Harman is addressing?

KDK seeks to close the achievement gap that exists between economically disadvantaged children and their higher income peers in Central Texas to ensure that all students receive an excellent education. We define “economically disadvantaged” students as students who are eligible for free and reduced lunch. Students’ eligibility for free or reduced-price school lunches is an indicator commonly used by schools to determine the number of children from low-income families. Children qualify for free lunches under the National School Lunch Act if their family income does not exceed 130% of the federal poverty level and for reduced-price lunches if their family income is above 130% but below 185% of the poverty level.ⁱⁱ

Gaps in student achievement between different racial/ethnic and income groups begin showing up in kindergarten. Central Texas data show that TAKS passing rates of different subpopulations are relatively close in 3rd grade, but widen by 5th grade. By 8th grade, there are large disparities with Black, Hispanic and Low Income students passing at rates 30-40 percentage points lower than white students (E3 Alliance).

Nearly half of all entering kindergarteners in the US come from families with one or more risk factors for poor educational outcomes. In Central Texas, several family background characteristics are linked to poor educational outcomes for students, such as low achievement, repeating grades, suspension and dropping out. The four risk factors are: (1) having a mother with less than a high-school education; (2) living in a family that receives food stamps or cash welfare payments; living in a single-parent household; and (4) having parents whose primary language is something other than English.ⁱⁱⁱ Access to quality education programming can improve school readiness and subsequent chances for school success, financial independence, and social stability. In other words, KDK-Harman Foundation believes that education is the great equalizer.

We have spent time in the paragraphs above discussing the correlation between income and achievement gaps, which addresses the *why* of our mission, but we also believe that there is a larger issue at work in our public school system that affects all students, regardless of socio-economic status, race, or ethnicity, and that issue is that the US has an educational system stuck in the 20th century. This problem addresses the *how* of our

work. Students have been telling pollsters for years that they are not challenged academically in their schools, and the proportion of teenagers in this country who find part-time, often dead-end work more fulfilling than school is far higher than in countries with the highest student achievement. Meanwhile, interest in careers that give our economy an edge—math and the sciences—cannot keep up with the demand. This young generation, poor and affluent alike, is the first to live in a technology-driven society that is changing our concept of knowledge and literacy. However, our schools are not often at the forefront in creative uses of technology, which exacerbates an inequitable situation for low-income students. This is what we see: students coping with realities never imagined even one generation ago—and public schools trying to respond to growing academic demands by overloading our outmoded structure.

What does KDK see as the underlying causes of this issue?

Our nation has never had as many students or as diverse a student population in its schools as it does now. Texas has the fastest growing child population in the country, and Central Texas child population is growing at twice the state rate. The large majority of these students are low-income and Latino. In fact, the low income student population is growing at twice the rate of overall Central Texas student population (Texas Education Agency AEIS Reports 2003 and 2007).^{iv} Poor children and those of color, on average, are not well served by the structure of our current education system.

At the same time that our region is experiencing a booming growth in low-income children, our state has cut support of public education drastically, and the community—including private philanthropy—is being tapped to fill those state budget gaps like never before. In fact, Texas already ranks 44th in per student spending and ranks very near the bottom in many other aspects of child well being, including health. Schools are doing their very best to provide not just academic services to their students, but have also been tasked with providing many other types of support to low-income students and their families that they are not inherently designed to address—such as helping students access shelter, food, mental health resources, gang prevention, and other critical resources. All of these elements must be in place before students can learn, yet many students do not have these basic needs met.

In middle and upper-middle income communities, in-school and out-of-school learning times blend together. Families can afford home resources, cultural experiences, sports activities, and safe, nurturing environments for their children. Yet there are too many low-income parents who do not have these choices. These children spend more time watching TV and risk obesity and health problems. These children are also more likely to be victims of or commit crimes, and are more susceptible to the temptations of smoking, drug use, and sexual activity. In sum, we have more students who are at-risk entering schools that are required to provide more rigorous academic standards, while at the same time struggling to meet basic needs of students, all under a system and structure that is obsolete and ill-equipped to prepare students for the 21st century.

At what depth or level does KDK want to work?

See assumptions above.

KDK's involvement in philanthropy assumes a **very direct grantmaking approach**. **This type of grantmaking includes a high level of engagement** between the Foundation and its grantees throughout the life of the relationship. KDK's grantees can be described as taking on the role of an investment, allowing for active involvement from both parties, versus the role of a traditional grant, which suggests a hands-off approach. KDK also works with its grantees to facilitate collaboration between like-minded organizations, such as nonprofits, funders, policymakers, journalists and other education stakeholders.

In KDK-Harman's pursuit to further engage in our charitable mission, our team stands as a firm believer that institutional change in education takes more than money. It requires collaboration and knowledge about what works as well as access to tools that help put that knowledge into practice. We recognize that our impact is limited when serving as a sole player in this arena. KDK remains committed to increasing organizational and field effectiveness, advancing knowledge and encouraging knowledge sharing, and promoting collaboration among stakeholders.

Additionally, to exemplify the nature of KDK's high engagement approach, **KDK offers hands-on consulting services** to its grantees. In addition to offering grantees financial and operational support, the Foundation also actively **convenes networking and collaborative learning opportunities** for nonprofit agencies and area funders.

The Foundation's theory of change resonates as a ripple effect beginning from transforming the lives of individuals and moving outward (think about the levels of change in education by imagining a series of five concentric circles) toward influencing organizations, networks, education policy, and, finally, ideas:

Individuals: Support individual achievement (students), for example, through after-school tutoring; or cultivate influential individuals (teachers and principals), for example, through professional development or new materials and tools;

Organizations: Strengthen organizations (schools, school districts, or the organizations that work with them), for example, through strategic planning or organizational development;

Networks: Connect individuals and organizations to share ideas and pursue joint action, for example, through convening groups and collaborations to craft joint strategies;

Policy: Influence education policy (government and policymakers), for example, through advocacy or public will building; and

Ideas: Bring new ideas into play in the education field, for example, through research and support of "thought leaders."

What impact does KDK want to achieve? What would a solution to the issue/problem look like?

KDK-Harman Foundation's long-term desired impact is to close achievement gaps for low-income students in Central Texas, preparing them with 21st Century skills and access to quality careers, therefore, breaking the cycle of poverty for them and future generations. We seek to do this by improving student achievement beginning in the primary grades and particularly in math and science, raising graduation rates, and ensuring students are prepared for post-secondary success.

We envision a region where all students can experience blended learning environments both in and out-of-school, and engage in project-based and inquiry-based learning that prepares them for post-secondary success. As a result, the achievement gap is consistently narrowing between low-income students—which now make up the majority of the Austin Independent School District—and middle and upper income students, with a growing number of at-risk students completing high school and pursuing post-secondary opportunities and living wage careers.

Target Groups

Who/what would be impacted?

Directly, those impacted are low-income Central Texas students, the majority of whom are minority and many of whom are English Language Learners. Indirectly, the impact reaches the students' families, Central Texas citizens (i.e. taxpayers) and our community in general. The Foundation views education as an essential means towards achieving financial independence and enabling a better life for families and their future generations. A better educated society will result in lower crime rates, a decrease in domestic violence and child abuse, a reduction to the burdened healthcare system, and increased economic productivity.

How could KDK reach/influence/impact the identified groups/structures? What vehicles could KDK use?

Direct Grants—KDK will reach the identified target group through intermediary organizations that serve their educational and training needs. The Foundation will work with nonprofits and schools who specifically serve this population.

Consulting—KDK-Harman Consulting was created to build upon the strength of our grantor/grantee relationships and to help nonprofits overcome organizational challenges, otherwise not developed in a traditional grantor/grantee relationship. In consideration of KDK-Harman's overarching mission, the Foundation's grantmaking and consulting activities are focused towards building upon the capacity of our current grantees to execute their missions effectively and efficiently. One of the key objectives of KDK-Harman's consulting service is to capitalize on resources that will create opportunities

that provide a deeper and lasting impact in the organizational lives of our grantees and the services they provide to our Central Texas community.

Convening—KDK looks to influence other funders of education by sharing its success with its grantees and encourage other funders to invest in programs applicable to their respective mission goals. At a topical level, funders are area and state foundations.

The Foundation also plans to share its lessons learned with others in the community to spark discussion of effective models. This includes sharing information and experience with field leaders, service providers, media outlets, when applicable, and other interested parties.

Advocacy—Last, but not least, in 2009, KDK-Harman Foundation embarked on becoming more readily *educated* and *involved* in advocacy. We realized that in order to make a sustained, positive impact in our community, supporting effective organizations and programs is only one component to the multi-dimensional world we live in. Attention must also be focused on systems and policies to enable promising opportunity of maximum benefit for women and families our organizational mission seeks to assist.

In this pursuit, our advocacy tactics and strategies have spanned to include:

- **Building Knowledge** – Utilization of resources to encourage understanding, dialogue and collaboration between organizations interested in taking action in public policy;
- **Direct Involvement** - Participation in local, state and national forums, informing lawmakers of the impact of the nonprofit and philanthropic communities;
- **Convening** – Connection of funders, grantees and legislators to identify opportunities and synergies for development of positive policy and systems changes;
- **Demonstration Grants** – Deployment of foundation’s funding to innovative projects and collaborations designed to demonstrate better and more effective ways of delivering quality educational services

The roots of our approach can be found in several of KDK-Harman’s core principals. For a detailed view of our advocacy strategy, view our advocacy logic model.

Strategies

What tools or processes would KDK need to impact/influence the identified groups?

Grantmaking Strategy:

In 2011, the Foundation made a decision to refine its grantmaking focus to re-imagine how, when and where young people learn. The KDK-Harman Foundation believes that we must dramatically rethink the whole day for students so that learning experiences are seamless and unrestricted by walls, clocks, or calendars. We seek to integrate in-and-out-

of-school learning by supporting efforts to reimagine and expand learning time during the traditional school day and year as well as during the summer months in order to meet students where they are.

KDK-Harman Foundation's vision for learning builds on a foundation of core academics by leveraging community resources to incorporate strategies such as hands-on learning, working in teams, and problem-solving. Before, after-school and summer programs are a few of the places in and out of the classrooms that are already using these learning approaches to engage students and increase their chances for success.

As such, we have identified the growing importance and role of:

- Projects that focus on Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) and integrating technology into teaching and learning;
- Improving the quality of and access to out-of-school-time programs; and
- Enabling and supporting systems-level change and collaboration to support an excellent education for all Central Texas students.

A strategic opportunity for KDK-Harman to engage more intensely in STEM activities, and that integrates with the aforementioned recommended initiatives of technology and extended learning time, the Foundation seeks to target effective and innovative teaching and learning in STEM, and its evaluation, for educating low-income students as well as preparing providers (i.e. teachers, schools, and nonprofit organizations) on the rigor and successful and sustainable implementation of these programs.

We seek established, "best-in-class" programs that can demonstrate measurable outcomes. We define best-in-class as those organizations that possess outstanding leadership; the planning, budgeting, and operating procedures generate confidence in the organization's capabilities; the project outcomes are well-designed, specific, and reasonable; and the programs have the ability to be replicated and/or brought to scale.

Grantee Consulting Strategy:

Beyond direct financial investment, the Foundation reaffirms its commitment to support our investments in the areas of capacity building of our grantee portfolio, including board development, leadership and talent development, evaluation assistance, communications/marketing, and fundraising through our consulting arm. The outcome of these hands-on support aim to strengthen the organizational effectiveness of KDK-Harman's grantee partners.

This underscores our belief to help our partners sustain their operations over the long term and become enduring “institutions of change”. We continue to look for new and successful ways to provide such support and though it is highly individualized and determined by grantee needs, we look forward to prioritizing the following two areas of capacity building in 2011:

- **Collaborative Learning Experiences:** Building upon the Foundation's strength as a convener and facilitator, KDK-Harman will continue its efforts to support peer learning activities. Based on requests from our grantee partners, plans are underway in 2011 to address effective strategies for communications and media relations and active engagement in public policy.
- **Evaluation Support:** Given the importance KDK-Harman Foundation places on evaluation of its grantee partners and itself, we are working with area universities to compile a list of expert external evaluators to help strengthen and improve the effectiveness of education-focused organizations and delivery of their programs. We are also keenly interested in supporting the evaluation capacity of OST programs in order to ensure these OST programs can deliver the highest quality services possible.

Advocacy and Community Engagement Strategy:

KDK-Harman Foundation believes that access to quality education programming can improve school readiness and subsequent chances for school success, financial independence, and social stability. In other words, KDK-Harman Foundation believes that education is the great equalizer. Therefore, we support public policy that:

1. Promotes access to excellent and equitable public education to all Central Texans and beyond.
2. Encourages the State of Texas to invest strategically in the "highest impact educational reforms" in order to increase student achievement.
3. Ensures that educational opportunities both in and out-of-school provide students with 21st century skills to meet the demands of today's global society, particularly in the areas of Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM).

Our activities in this area include active support, participation and coordination of legislative advocacy and coalition building around education issues facing economically disadvantaged families in Central Texas and a concentrated effort to build and strengthen the non-profit sector in understanding advocacy as a key lever to improve the state of education in Central Texas and beyond.

What resources (financial, time, skills and knowledge) would KDK need to employ these tools and processes to effectively influence the target groups? Which resources does KDK already have?

Currently, there are three staff members, two interns, and three board members who maintain a seven-county area. As KDK does not have an issue specific expert on staff, KDK looks to evidence-based and proven initiatives and using educational consultants,

practitioners, and experts to model its grantmaking. Rather than creating its own initiatives, KDK supports proven initiatives and brings those to its Central Texas community. KDK operates more as a partner with its grantees to jointly determine goals and objectives in hope to bring organization's success to scale. Specifically, as KDK serves a seven county area, effective and efficient programs can be expanded to rural communities surrounding Travis County.

Financial and time:

Currently, the Foundation is currently valued at approximately \$28 million with grantmaking projections of \$900,000 in 2011 and upwards of \$1 million in 2012. Furthermore, KDK prefers to make the minimum grant award of \$25,000 or above.

Knowledge, time, and skills:

Since the Foundation's conception, KDK invested in a professional staff to carry out these duties alongside its board of directors. The executive director heads all grant management responsibilities and the consultant manages the high engagement capacity building with grantee portfolio. Both staff play a significant role in KDK's convening efforts. Also, there are two interns responsible for Foundation special projects and research. In addition to full time staff, board members are involved with researching educational issues and networking with area players (foundations, nonprofit agencies, issue experts and policymakers, etc.).

Furthermore, KDK leverages its knowledge learning and sharing through memberships to local and national educational and philanthropic associations. The memberships enable attendance to issue specific conferences and access to research knowledge, as well as networking benefits.

What skills, knowledge, and other resources do you need to develop? How can KDK capitalize on the resources of people who have/are involved in the issue or problem?

In terms of knowledge, KDK is continuing to educate itself on local, regional and national education initiatives and debates. Resources such as publications, networking, peer learning, and involvement in professional conferences are key to the development of KDK's intellectual capital. This avenue also allows KDK to focus funds on its grantmaking efforts and minimize overhead costs, while keeping abreast of its program interests.

Furthermore, KDK has been an integral partner to the establishment of Central Texas Education Funders (CTEF), a membership group of funding agencies in and around Austin, Texas, who focus on education as one of their grantmaking priorities. The mission of CTEF is to improve the effectiveness of the education sector by providing opportunities for collaborative learning, funding and advocacy among Central Texas funders. Through more informed and coordinated decisions about funding opportunities, CTEF hopes to support and expand effective programs, reduce the amount of duplicative

services, foster innovation in program work, increase the level of investment in education and improve the efficiency and effectiveness of grantmaking.

Who else is working in the field? Are there opportunities for cooperation and partnership? Is there likely to be competition with others? Can/Does KDK want to work in partnership with others? Which skills and resources could KDK borrow from others?

Both at a national and local scale, there are many entities (public/nonprofit/for-profit sectors) working on breaking the cycle of poverty through education. The largest funder of education, by far, is the state and federal government, however private philanthropy increasingly plays a role in supporting innovative reform efforts to help provide equal education to all students. Public-private partnership between the government and private philanthropy is critical to providing much needed research and development to the education space to find innovative solutions to educational challenges, as well as allowing effective programs to scale to reach more students.

ⁱ Improving Public Education: A Guide for Donors to Make a Difference, Association of Small Foundations, page 4.

ⁱⁱ Ibid.

ⁱⁱⁱ Improving Public Education: A Guide for Donors to Make a Difference, Association of Small Foundations, page 9.

^{iv} 2010 Central Texas Education Profile, E3 Alliance.