

Nonprofit-Led Collaboration: The Case of Homeless Services

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Background

- Trend toward using collaborative networks to address complex public problems
- Motivations of nonprofits to participate are multidimensional
- Literature largely assumes that government drives collaborations
- Less attention paid to the role of facilitative leadership of nonprofit agencies involved in steering partners to effective outcomes

Research Questions

- What does the collaboration process look like under nonprofit leadership?
 - What are the governance structures, service focuses, and challenges under nonprofit-led collaborations?

Previous Work

- Nonprofits identified as leading social services, with variation dependent on economic & social conditions (Berman & West 1995)
- Partnership motivation (i.e., programmatic needs & organizational goals) affects the effectiveness of public networks (Jang, Valero & Jung 2016)
- Nonprofits with more frequency lead collaborative networks in homeless policy context (Valero & Jang 2016)

Nonprofits *Leading* Collaborations

- From **third party government** perspective (Salamon 1987), government shares substantial discretion of funding and authority with nonprofit service providers: Nonprofits with greater frequency, preferred provider of government services
- Like in service provision, nonprofits are in good position **even to lead** public service collaborations because of:
 - Flexibility
 - Local expertise
 - Credible commitment
 - Local support
 - Access to the philanthropic resources
 - Public focus

Research Design

- Context: Homeless services under HEARTH act of 2009
- Data: interviews with organizations leading collaborations and select participants of collaboration
- Sample: case study of 2 Continuum of Care networks in Utah & Texas
- Analysis: Word frequency analysis (Nvivo) to identify key themes

Demographics of Cases

	Salt Lake County (Utah)	Dallas County (Texas)
Homeless Population	2,463	3,447
Total Population	1,073,412	3,079,964
Homeownership Rate	68%	58%
Poverty Rate	10.89%	14.94%
Unemployment Rate	6.65%	7.15%
HUD Funding	\$5,678,852	\$15,663,757
Number of Network Members	26	100+

Governance



Dallas



Salt Lake

Early Observations

- While initially collaborations are informal, they evolve into formalized structures, with a stand-alone nonprofit form preferred (as a network administrator or leading agency)
- Nonprofit organizations provide flexibility & opportunity to pursue various resources to achieve collaborative missions
- Nonprofit leading public service network may generate trust, social capital, & political standing to engage various partners
- Influential stakeholders maintain oversight of nonprofit operations via board structure
- Key service providers maintain leadership role in nonprofit leading networks