



FUTURE FOUNDATION

ATLANTA, GEORGIA

A Case Study





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1. Key Program Distinctions

Future Foundation is a community-based organization providing services to disadvantaged and at-risk youth in an underserved community in Atlanta, Georgia. While its principal audience is high school- and middle school-age youth who Future Foundation serves primarily with after-school leadership activities, it also serves TANF families because the parents of most of its students are TANF-eligible or TANF recipients. Future Foundation receives a \$100,000 annual TANF grant from the state of Georgia for its after-school programs, and it is serving an increasing number of TANF “families” through its parenting classes.

This access brings both opportunities and challenges. In addition, although Future Foundation was founded by Shareef Abdur-Rahim, a Muslim basketball player who grew up in the neighborhood where Future Foundation is located, the organization now partners with a variety of Christian congregations and local volunteers. This brings a unique interfaith dynamic to the facility, with a common bond among staff and volunteers that emerges from a shared commitment to supporting disconnected youth in the community. Future Foundation is funded by several large Federal grants, a small local government grant, foundation support, corporate sponsors, and individual donors. A list of site visit participants consulted in developing this report is included as an appendix.

2. Atlanta's Demographics

As of 2007, Atlanta had a population of 439,275, of which 33,827 families had children younger than age 18.

Home to a number of Fortune 500 companies, Atlanta also serves as headquarters to several national and international companies. Approximately 75 percent of all Fortune 1000 companies have a presence in Atlanta. Atlanta is also home to a number of Federal government agencies, including the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. In 2007, Atlanta had a median income of \$44,163 and an unemployment rate of 6.4 percent.

Exhibit 1: Demographic Information for Atlanta^a	
Population	
2007	439,275
Ethnicity (2007)	
White	37.7%
African-American	56.8%
Asian or Pacific Islander	1.9%
Hispanic or Latino origin ^b	4.7%
Age Composition (2007)	
0-19	110,466
20-24	35,359
25-44	148,030
45-64	106,053
65 +	39,367
Median Age	35.0
Gender Composition (2007)	
Male	220,598
Female	218,677
Median Income (2007)	
per household	\$44,163
Unemployment Rate	
2007	6.4%
Georgia TANF Indicators (FY 2008)	
Recipients (average)	39,377
Families (average)	22,100
Children (average)	36,776
<small>^a Source: U.S. Census Bureau. (2007). <i>American Community Survey 2005-2007</i>. Retrieved September 2009 from http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/DatasetMainPageServlet?_program=ACS&_submenuid=&_lang=en&_ts= U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families. (2008). <i>TANF Caseload Data</i>. Retrieved September 2009, from http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ofa/data-reports/caseload/caseload_recent.html#2008 ^b Hispanics may be of any race, so also are included in applicable race categories.</small>	

In 2008, an average of 39,377 recipients were receiving TANF benefits in the State of Georgia. More information regarding Atlanta's demographics is presented in Exhibit 1.



3. Future Foundation's Historical Background and Development

Established in 2001, Future Foundation was founded to provide scholarships to youth, as well as to administer holiday food and toy drives. It has since expanded considerably, and today operates nine educational and support programs.

Future Foundation is staffed by 14 full-time and 10 part-time staff members. It is also supported by three to six weekly volunteers—and for larger initiatives, Future Foundation is able to call on additional support from its database of more than 125 volunteers.

With an annual budget of \$1.5 million, Future Foundation's four programs are primarily federally funded. The Foundation has current grants from the Community-Based Abstinence Education (CBAE), the Department of Health and Human Services' Administration for Children and Families, the Office of Family Assistance, and the U.S. Department of Education. Future Foundation also receives \$100,000 in TANF funding for its after-school programs. Two of its largest grants—a \$400,000 grant from CBAE and a \$650,000 Healthy Marriage grant—will end next year. Since these grants account for more than 65 percent of the organization's funding, Future Foundation is actively exploring ways to diversify its funding.

Each year, Future Foundation serves approximately 4,000 youth—more than 90 percent of whom live below the poverty level. Approximately 40–50 percent are estimated to be TANF recipients. Of its 4,000 youth, between 220 and 300 students participate in Future Foundation's after-school programs, and 1,500 receive training through the Healthy Relationships program. A large number of youth are also served through one-time events, such as church presentations. In addition to serving youth, Future Foundation provides services to parents. This year, approximately 130 parents attended Future Foundation's Parent Connect Program; the foundation also provides Thanksgiving dinner to more than 500 families each year.

Future Foundation's programs focus on academic support, although relationships skills and physical fitness are also important goals. Specific growth is sought by increasing math and literacy skills, as measured by the Georgia Standardized Test; by reducing the number of students who demonstrate poor school behavior; by increasing life skills among children; by successfully completing a prevention curriculum by at least 70 percent of participants; by improving physical fitness and nutrition for at least 75 percent of program participants; and by engaging at least 50 percent of the youth's parents in the parenting program. In addition, each specific grant initiative has its own targeted goals. Future Foundation carefully tracks program attendance, academic grades, behavioral records, truancy, and other relevant indicators, in order to ensure that its programs are positively impacting its youth.¹

4. Programmatic Information

Future Foundation operates two after-school programs through its Reef House After-School Program. The programs are free of charge and they provide transportation to participants, which eliminates many logistical barriers for participating families, and, as one partner commented, makes it “easy to get kids to sign on.” Youth in grades 5–7 are offered after-school educational assistance and recreational activities at the Reef House Learning Center. Older youth in grades 8–12 are offered after-school services in the Reef Teen Center, operated in partnership with the City of College Park and Recreation Department. Youth in grades 5–7 attend on a daily basis, while youth in grades 8–12 are required to come only 2 days each week (although many choose to attend more). In addition to educational and recreational activities, youth in these programs are offered job training and courses in communication and life skills.

In addition, each month the program offers an apprenticeship program and activity, where youth learn about different businesses such as carpentry, plumbing, or hairdressing.

¹ Generally, Future Foundation is committed to using data to enhance programming. However, Future Foundation is not yet recording outcomes for its Youth Employment Program; that is expected to change in the coming year.



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With such variety and positive support for youth, Future Foundation's after-school programs have become so popular that there is currently a large waiting list, and securing enough facility space and transportation to bring in all the kids who want to participate in the program has become a challenge. Increasingly, Future Foundation is collaborating with community partners and asking its founder to pay for transportation fees.

TANF funds currently supplement many of the youth served by the Reef Teen Center. As one partner explained, "the TANF work piece has proven to be very valuable because it teaches skills to support the youth." It also has enabled students to earn wages, which sometimes allows them to support their households. Future Foundation staff see the Reef House After-School Program as overlapping with three of the four TANF goals. First, the program offers economic support by caring for youth while parents are at work. Second, it educates youth on business etiquette, tangible job skills, resume-building, and video production. And third, its abstinence-based programming is consistent with the school curriculum and the TANF goal of preventing and reducing out-of-wedlock pregnancies.

While Future Foundation's primary connection is with the youth, as one partner comments, "you can't get away from servicing parents when you're servicing children." For years, Future Foundation has informally engaged parents of after-school participants through follow-up phone calls, and with invitations to group basketball games and other annual events.

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In recent years, however, it has sought to serve parents more directly through a new endeavor called Parent Connect, a targeted program that provides monthly workshops to parents on issues such as financial literacy, home ownership, and

how to talk with your child about difficult subjects. The class is operated like a "parent university," where parents earn "credits" and receive a "diploma" upon graduation. Parents receive a graduation incentive upon completion of the program—typically something the family has expressed interest in attaining, such as movie tickets or something of practical value that involves the youth.

Future Foundation staff members regard Parent Connect as a natural extension of its commitment to serving at-risk youth comprehensively. One individual notes that "there is a direct link between a student's family life and student performance, so involving the parents is key. Many parents don't have a higher education, and don't know about student achievement and standardized testing."

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Future Foundation also teaches a curriculum on Healthy Relationships for youth, a course taught in partnership with the school system, and the schools' Family Consumer classes. Future Foundation partners with the Fulton County Public Schools to deliver the RealTalk ATL curriculum by placing Future Foundation staff members in health classes. The class involves a forum for practicing relationship skills, developing conflict-resolution techniques, and improving communication. In 2009, one youth felt the curriculum was so beneficial that she effectively advocated for its implementation in her church.

Future Foundation's Healthy Marriage Initiative enables parents of youth to attend a wide variety of relationship-building courses, including financial literacy. Additionally, Future Foundation operates a fitness and nutrition program to prevent obesity and promote health in youth. The goal of this program



is to serve more than 200 youth, helping them increase their levels of physical activity, nutrition, and fitness.

Finally, Future Foundation also received a Compassion Capital Fund capacity-building grant, which supports overall program development and community engagement work, such as Parent Connect. These funds also allowed a consulting firm, Dare Mighty Things, to spend one day onsite at Future Foundation to advise the organization's leadership about strategic development. One individual believes that "the capacity-building grant is largely why [Future Foundation has been] so successful."

5. Partnerships and Community Engagement

While TANF funding from Georgia's Department of Families and Children's Services (DFCS) is not as large as some of its other grants, Future Foundation uses TANF funds to support the Reef House After-School program. The partnership between DFCS and Future Foundation is contractual, and supported by an annual memorandum of understanding. The TANF agency makes referrals to the Reef House After-School Program, which is required to provide service to at least 30 youth 3 days a week. The program is also required to have health education and teen activity as one component in its curriculum. One of 336 sites across the State, Future Foundation is part of Georgia's initiative to assist youth during times when they are not in school. The funding requires a matching contribution (whether in-kind or one-to-one) from Future Foundation to participate.

The collaboration with DFCS began in 2005, when Future Foundation received a small TANF grant with the potential to renew funding in forthcoming cycles, contingent upon performance. Since 2005, Future Foundation has been awarded new funds every year. Staff members credit the organization's communication with DFCS, the overall effectiveness and results of their programs, and networking in a strategic part of the community. One partner noted that

Future Foundation, unlike many other social service agencies, is "right there in the community. They're very 'away' from businesses. Their location is admirable. They had strong support...They also fed the kids, which many programs after school don't do."

Youth-Oriented Partnerships

Another key partner for Future Foundation is the Fulton County School District. There are 54 Title I schools in the district, and seven schools that receive Supplemental Education Services because they did meet their adequate yearly progress goals. Parents with students attending one of these seven schools can choose to send their child elsewhere, and to have their child's education supplemented by an after-school program. Reef House is one such provider. One partner commented that she has had "no problems with the Reef House or Future Foundation. Although there are some inconsistencies among other providers, Reef House seems to be working. They cover students from 5th to 12th grade." Communication between Future Foundation's Reef House and the school district occurs in the form of a monthly attendance sheet and meetings with parents.

In addition, through a 5-year grant from the Office of Family Assistance (OFA), Future Foundation also partners with the Fulton County School District to educate youth on healthy relationships through RealTalk ATL, which is supported in part by its OFA grant. The majority of the youth served by this program consist of economically disadvantaged students who receive free lunches. A Future Foundation staff member works closely with the health teacher with whom he or she is partnered to deliver the RealTalk ATL curriculum to students. One partnering health teacher cited the value of weekly communication with her Future Foundation facilitator, as well as the program's overall "comfortability" in handling key concepts with consistency and ease, although she also felt the partnership could be stronger if it were to incorporate more financial literacy into its subject matter.



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Future Foundation recently forged a partnership with three professors of social work from the Georgia State University School of Social Work to develop outcome measures and refine its overall program evaluation. The organization's leadership understands that tracking participation outcomes is essential to improving programming—as well as successfully competing for future funding. Though the professors are not financially compensated for their work, they are all highly interested in studying trends regarding children, violence, and the impact of violent neighborhoods, and this overlaps considerably with Future Foundation's work.

The goal is that an initial survey will provide a platform of outcomes from teen participants that can be used as a baseline and built upon in later projects. Surveys were sent out in January 2010, and Future Foundation staff members are overseeing and assisting with data entry for participants. The professors are also obtaining data for a control group from individuals on the waiting list for Future Foundation's programs.

Future Foundation has also partnered with Fulton County Youth Employment Services, a workforce development site, to provide summer employment to its youth. The collaboration is supported by a memorandum of understanding, and funding from the Department of Labor is funneled through Fulton County Youth Employment Services to Future Foundation. Though both organizations serve both younger and older youth, this partnership's target population is 14–15-year-olds. Last summer, this partnership allowed 20 youth to hold part-time jobs for 4 weeks, teaching them important employment skills. Through this partnership, Future Foundation is tasked with recording hours and providing a worksite where it offers on-the-job training.

Future Foundation also partners with a number of local faith-based and community organizations. Through its CCF capacity-building grant, Future Foundation partners with four community-based organizations: the Andrew Young YMCA, East Point Community Action Team, Quest for Change, and Seeds of Success. Several churches send volunteers to work with

students on Saturdays, and through the relationships cultivated by the capacity-building partnership, Future Foundation's network of partners has expanded to include other community organizations as well.

The interfaith dynamic at Future Foundation is also unique: while the founder of Future Foundation is Muslim, the majority of faith-based organizations with which the organization collaborates are Christian. One of its strongest faith-based partners, Elizabeth Baptist Church, not only provides space for Future Foundation staff members to work with students, it also makes available the RealTalk ATL course to all its members.

“One of [Future Foundations’] strongest faith-based partners, Elizabeth Baptist Church, not only provides space for Future Foundation staff members to work with students, it also makes available the RealTalk ATL course to all its members. This partnership originated after a student who had a positive experience with RealTalk ATL in the public school system introduced the program to the church.”

When asked how the partnership with Future Foundation could be strengthened, one volunteer indicated that local congregations could probably benefit from “a basic education about TANF policy, so more of us could know when people we work with are eligible for benefits.” Given its extensive work with the youth of TANF-eligible families, Future Foundation is in a strong position to help educate local congregations, volunteers, and community organizations about the benefits of public collaboration.

6. Lessons Learned

- **Clients are strong advocates for the development of new partnerships between DHS and faith- and community-based organizations.** In a different way than paid staff do, a client who has a positive experience in a



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program often quickly becomes a living testament of the effectiveness of the program, and the benefits of enrolling. In Atlanta, the RealTalk ATL example with Elizabeth Baptist Church attests to this, since clients with pre-established relationships can build on existing trust in the community, as well as firsthand experience as program recipients.

- **Working with youth helps close the loop with TANF and TANF-eligible families.** Future Foundation's programming helps to prevent out of wedlock pregnancies, thereby supporting one of TANF's core purposes. It's highly successful outreach to parents through its Parent Connect initiative illustrates the benefits of this access, as well as a simple principle: when youth receive high-quality service, the service providers can earn access to and trust from the parents. Moreover, the connection to their children is often one of the strongest motivators for parents.
- **Interfaith partnerships are facilitated by shared activity.** Future Foundation has a Muslim founder, and the organization led by his sister (who shares this same faith background) has been strengthened, not hampered, by forging creative partnerships with local Christian churches, faith-based volunteers, and community-based organizations. Keeping the spotlight on student development—and key measures—has enabled positive collaboration across faith traditions.
- **Tracking data to measure program effectiveness helps stakeholders better understand the value of a service organization and its community impact.** Utilizing research support from a local university, as Future Foundation has done, helps volunteers and current staff have more confidence in their work—and it also establishes factual credibility for prospective funders about the organization's contribution.

7. Conclusion

Future Foundation's indirect approach to serving TANF recipients and TANF-eligible families, by serving low-income

youth, is a unique model for partnership between a community-based organization and a TANF office—and it is working in Atlanta. While the partnership is limited, Future Foundation has made a considerable impact in the lives of TANF and TANF-eligible families by serving their children, and more and more, by deepening their services for parents and helping them better connect with their children's needs. In fact, one previous TANF recipient and parent of a Future Foundation participant commented that she has been involved with the program's Reef House After-School initiative since its inception:

Prepping the children for the SATs was so intense, it was amazing. We would give them prep tests for the whole week leading up to the CRCT. It was coming out of the children's ears. We always tell our children to study, but people don't really explain what that is, and I don't really know and I'm still working on what that is. But we implemented study tactics to teach the children how to take notes, do the outlines, and pull the information when there are lectures.

This particular mother described direct benefits from participating in Future Foundation's Parent Connect program. More broadly, Future Foundation's comprehensive service to youth has led to concrete support to their families. This kind of "expanding collaboration," like Future Foundation's partnership with the State's Department of Human Services, shows the merits of joining forces with the State TANF initiative, the faith community, schools, volunteers, and other community organizations.



List of Site Visit Participants – Future Foundation

Qaadirah Abdur-Rahim, Executive Director, Future Foundation
Shaunae Motley, Director of Programs, Future Foundation
Gavin McGuire, Director of After-school Programs & TANF Coordinator, Future Foundation
Kevin Morris, Coordinator, Reef House Teen Center
Pamela Baisden, Director of Title I Department, Fulton County Public Schools
Gayla Smith-Mitchell, Principal, Douglass High School
Milton Campbell, Associate Pastor, Elizabeth Baptist Church
Mary Wilson, Volunteer, East Point Community Action Team
Audrey Lawrence, Case Manager, Fulton County Youth Employment Services
Elizabeth Beck and Amy Glass, Lead Evaluators, Georgia State University School of Social Work
Barbara Warner, Associate Professor, Georgia State University Institute of Public Health
Shelly Baker, Greenbriar Mall Representative and Reef House Parent
Mark Washington, Assistant Commissioner, Georgia Department of Human Services
Carmen Callaway, Program Manager, Georgia Department of Human Services
Donna Gunter, TANF Unit Manager, Georgia Department of Human Services

TANF FAITH-BASED AND COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS INITIATIVE

