

Case Study: Holyoke

Assessment of interim outcomes toward shared result

Outcome Areas	Indicators	Sub-Indicators	Holyoke
Progress toward shared result	Team has a shared knowledge of progress toward shared result, including changes in systems.	Team demonstrates programmatic progress in service of shared result.	
		Interviews surface that team has contributed to several substantive changes in practice, policies, and resource flows.	
		Multiple examples of changing relationships, changing perspectives, or changing capacity in service of the shared result.	
		WCC activities in the city have already made a difference in the lives of many low-income people in the city.	
	Cross-sector leaders, beyond the WCC team, are informed of team's progress toward shared result.	Team regularly communicates progress toward the measurable shared result to a broad set of organizations/leaders.	
		Stakeholders beyond the core leadership group believe the initiative has achieved significant progress on its strategies.	<i>Insufficient peripheral responses to assess</i>
	Team demonstrates how the progress to date relates to the pathway that will achieve its shared result.	Most stakeholders interviewed can articulate how their progress to date can lead to greater scale toward their 10-year population-level result.	
		Team articulates objective progress measures toward shared result, and can speak to team's positive performance relative to those measures.	

Assessment Key

Strong Progress	
Moderate Progress	
Limited Progress	

Assessment of interim outcomes related to civic infrastructure

Outcome Areas	Indicators	Sub-Indicators	Holyoke	
Expanded and sustained collaborative leadership	WCC team organizations demonstrate distributed leadership, sharing responsibility for achieving the shared result.			
	WCC team demonstrates preparation for sustaining collaborative, system-oriented work in service of shared result.			
	Existing leadership connections strengthened and new leaders are identified and engaged.	New or deeper relationships among organizations in the city and/or catalyzed changed perspectives among leaders.		
		New partners have been welcomed into the leadership of the initiative.		
		Partners place increased priority on working with leaders who represent the racial and ethnic diversity of the city.		
		Stakeholders cite rising, new, talented civic leaders who reflect the diversity of community.		
Team pursues ongoing collaboration with other networks, collaboratives, or other key organizations active in related systems in the city formally or informally on issues that extend beyond the specific WCC result.				
Value and diffusion of core elements	WCC team sees substantial contribution of core elements in progress toward shared result.	Stakeholders note collaborative leadership made a substantial impact on the outcomes the team achieved.		
		Stakeholders note community engagement made a substantial impact on the outcomes the team achieved.		
		Stakeholders note use of data made a substantial impact on the outcomes the team achieved.		
		Stakeholders note system change made a substantial impact on the outcomes the team achieved.		
	Organizational leaders bring core elements back to home organization and diffuse into practices and policies.	Partner organizations have changed systems to support stronger collaboration.		
		Partner organizations have changed systems to better engage residents.		
		Partner organizations have changed systems to better use data.		
Engaged residents	WCC partners regularly sought out resident voices and insights when developing strategies.			
	WCC team strategies directly respond to resident insights.			
	WCC team demonstrates that it is accountable to residents by directly communicating progress toward shared result.			
External recognition	WCC leaders develop or improve relationships with entities outside the city, including attracting new outside resources aligned with shared result.			

Overview

Holyoke is a city of just over 40,000 people located along the Connecticut River in western Massachusetts. Holyoke's population declined by 8 percent during the 1990s, and although its population has remained stable at around 40,000, the number of households has declined by 6.3 percent between 2011 and 2016. Holyoke is a relatively poor community with a large and growing Hispanic population that is primarily Puerto Rican. Hispanics, who comprised 50 percent of the city's 2016 population, grew 20.5 percent during the 1990s and by another 23 percent from 2000 to 2016, increasing from 13,573 to 20,130 over the 26-year period. In 2016, 92 percent of the city's Latino residents were of Puerto Rican ancestry. Holyoke's poverty rate at 28.6 percent is more than twice the state's poverty rate at 11.4. However, after reaching a peak rate of 31.7 percent in 2010, its poverty rate has decreased by 7.6 percent in the last five years despite the state's poverty rate increasing 10 percent.

Holyoke's Working Cities Challenge (WCC) initiative, SPARK, leverages the talents and aspirations of residents, especially the Hispanic population, to increase entrepreneurship and businesses within the city. In the original WCC application, SPARK's long-term result was to increase the share of Holyoke businesses that are Latino-owned from 9 percent in 2007 to 25 percent by 2020. To create a clearer measurable target, SPARK later modified its result articulating a 10-year goal of creating 300 new businesses. The team struggled over time with how explicit its goal should be with regard to targeting a specific ethnic group, but ultimately did keep as a secondary goal increasing Latino business ownership in Holyoke from 9 percent to 20 percent by 2024.

SPARK first established a trio of programmatic activities to promote entrepreneurship, to train existing and aspiring business owners, and to prepare entrepreneurs to start a new business. The major evolution in SPARK is a shift away from a program implementation orientation to an emphasis on strengthening the overall ecosystem and culture to support Latino and citywide entrepreneurs. This ecosystem orientation led SPARK to work with more partners, to work to understand and improve the coordination and integration of partners' services, and to address more barriers to business start-up and growth such as regulations, financing, and space. A strong collaboration among the city, chamber of commerce, small business development organizations, education and workforce development institutions, and several Latino business leaders has emerged to nurture and support entrepreneurs and to tackle some systemic barriers to business development.

While the geographic focus has always been creating businesses owned by Holyoke residents within the city, there is now increased attention to creating businesses that will locate in downtown Holyoke, which has many vacant buildings and abuts a largely low-income neighborhood. The increased focus on downtown reflects SPARK's recognition of the space needs of new businesses, of the city's priority on revitalizing the downtown core, and how using vacant downtown space could be part of the solution.

Governance structure, backbone organization, and staffing

SPARK's governance structure, leadership, and staffing have evolved since the initial application with the inclusion of more partners in the initiative governance, turnover of staff, and the Greater Holyoke Chamber Centennial Foundation assuming a stronger leadership role.

The original application envisioned a collaborative among six core partners connected to a larger network of supporting organizations and resource providers with the Greater Holyoke Chamber

Centennial Foundation as the backbone organization and fiscal agent. After the WCC grant award, a smaller core group of four organizations worked to adapt its plan to a smaller grant and to begin implementation. The core group included:

- Kathleen Anderson, Greater Holyoke Chamber Centennial Foundation (nonprofit);
- Katie Stebbins, Holyoke Innovation District (consultant to multisector task force);
- Maria Pagan, Holyoke Public Library director (government); and
- Marcos Marrero, Holyoke Planning and Economic Development director (government).

Upon implementation, a governance group, known as the Advisory Board (AB) formed. Its 14 members included city staff, nonprofit organizations, Holyoke Community College (HCC), the Holyoke Library, the Holyoke Innovation District, workforce agencies, several business owners, and representatives of the chamber of commerce. The executive director of the nonprofit Nuestras Raices (a Latino urban agriculture organization), two Latino business owners, and a Latino banker represented the Latino community. The AB met frequently (every two weeks) for the first year and focused on the details of implementing SPARK's program design, the training curriculum, program outreach and marketing, and participant selection for the first SPARK.Launch course. The team explored several models of entrepreneurship accelerator programs before landing on the CO.STARTERS, a cohort-based business start-up training program that uses a version of the "Business Model Canvas." During this initial 12- to 18-month period, the larger ecosystem and system change issues took a back seat to program implementation. SPARK hired Farid Khelifaoui as its executive director and later added Janet Crespo, a well-known Latino entrepreneur, to assist with resident engagement and outreach, especially to the Puerto Rican community. In the first year of the initiative, Katie Stebbins, who was a driving force in the application process and in formulating the initiative concept, left her position at the Holyoke Innovation District to work for the Massachusetts Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development. This created a temporary leadership gap for SPARK.

During the second year, with the core SPARK program in place, the governance group began to address the overall business ecosystem, partly prompted by coaching and a retreat facilitated by Pat Bowie, a consultant referred to SPARK by WCC staff. As the governance board began focusing on the ecosystem, it expanded to include several regional organizations, including SCORE and the Massachusetts Small Business Development Center (MSBDC), and it worked to understand each organization's services, to identify key resource gaps, and to strengthen the referral and resource ecosystem for entrepreneurs. During this period, there was increasing recognition that the executive director's skill set did not match SPARK's evolving needs, and he left in August 2016. Tessa Murphy-Romboletti, a Holyoke native who worked in the city's planning and economic development department, took over as the new program manager in December 2016. Janet Crespo also departed in May 2017, and Jona Ruiz, who was already working for SPARK, has assumed her responsibilities. A final change was the addition of Michael Moriarty of OneHolyoke CDC to the governance group/ecosystem committee.

Summary of initiative implementation

Holyoke's activities to implement the WCC initiative encompass four broad areas:

Core programming to promote entrepreneurship and foster new business creation: This resulted in SPARK's programming triad:

- *SPARK.Launch*—a nine-week accelerator class to help aspiring entrepreneur develop their business concept and prepare for start-up. To date, 91 participants have graduated from eight Launch sessions;
- *SPARK.Live*—networking and pitch events that highlight local businesses and engage the larger community around entrepreneurship. The main activity is Holyoke Soup night (eight to date) in which attendees pay \$5 for dinner, hear several business or project pitches, and vote for the best idea, which receives the collected funds; and
- *SPARK.Learn*—seminars and classes hosted by SPARK partners to address skill needs of existing businesses and aspiring entrepreneurs (17 workshops with 115 attendees to date).

Understanding and strengthening the city's ecosystem: SPARK first mapped the services its partners provided to better understand how each organization can assist entrepreneurs and is using this information to improve the quality of referrals, to more consistently track entrepreneurs, and to better connect them to resources. Through this work, the 12 main SPARK partners developed and signed a Collective Impact Agreement detailing how they will work together toward their shared goals, created a common intake form, and are now implementing a shared Customer Relationship Management (CRM) database to share information and to track and assist entrepreneurs and businesses. These efforts also facilitated new business support resources, including a Small Business Information Resource Center at Holyoke Library, a Holyoke Small Business Day conducted in partnership with SCORE, an ESOL course for business owners, and a new culinary training program implemented through a partnership between Holyoke Community College and Nuestras Raices.

Identifying and addressing system and resource barriers for entrepreneurs: These efforts primarily address city regulations, space availability for new businesses, and access to capital. After Latino business owners cited the difficult process involved in registering a new business, an early SPARK initiative worked with the city to simplify the business certification process from requirements for multiple city department sign-offs to a one-stop single sign-off process. The city is now looking to address other regulatory barriers. To address business capital needs, SPARK secured \$120,000 in city CDBG funds and used \$40,000 from a state Urban Agenda grant to create a fund that provides small grants up to \$10,000 to SPARK.Launch graduates to start their business. SPARK also increased its collaboration with Common Capital, the regional business financing CDFI, which has made loans to three SPARK.Launch graduates. Efforts also resulted in the implementation of additional training programs to strengthen business skills, including an ESOL class for businesses delivered by Holyoke Works and a bilingual bookkeeping class for entrepreneurs offered by the chamber of commerce and CareerPoint. Planning is underway to create a downtown co-working space to address the limited supply of ready-to-use space for new businesses.

Marketing and outreach to promote awareness of SPARK, to develop a pipeline of participants, and to create broader community interest in entrepreneurship: SPARK has used multiple media to market its programs and to generate applicants for each Launch class, and has hired staff with strong connections

to the Latino community to expand outreach in this targeted part of the city. SPARK also used a WCC Tactical Support grant to hire a consultant to strengthen its marketing work. The consultant's work resulted in a more cohesive marketing effort with videos highlighting successful entrepreneurs, a new website, a stronger brand message, and merchandise to promote SPARK while raising some revenue.

SPARK is actively working in all four of these areas with an orientation to increasing its effectiveness and impact. The seventh SPARK.Launch class began in fall 2017 with a new process in which a team of partners interviewed applicants to assess their readiness to start a business and selected applicants they viewed as most likely to start a business. Other applicants worked with a mentor from SCORE to continue to strengthen their business concept and plans. The SPARK partners are actively pursuing implementation of the CRM system, and the Ecosystem Governance Committee meets monthly to continue its efforts to strengthen the collaborative network and address system gaps.

Progress on shared result

Evidence of progress

Holyoke's progress toward its shared result has two components: (1) new business creation; and (2) improvements to the business development system.

- ✓ **SPARK completed six cohorts of SPARK.Launch through September 2017 that trained 70 aspiring entrepreneurs who established 33 new start-up businesses with 82 employees.**

Among SPARK graduates, 60 percent are women, 59 percent are Latino, and 55 percent are Holyoke residents. New businesses have similar demographics: 49 percent were started by women and 57 percent were started by minorities (most of which, 17 of 19, are Latino-owned). Three of these new businesses opened in vacant downtown storefronts.

- ✓ **Holyoke has a stronger, better recognized, and more accessible entrepreneurial and business development ecosystem resulting from the following improvements:**
 - more resources and services that include the SPARK programs, more activity and engagement from SCORE and MSBDC, and new services by HCC, the library, and the chamber of commerce;
 - a clearer point of entry and pathway for entrepreneurs seeking to create a new business;
 - expanded and more intentional efforts to identify and reach potential entrepreneurs and to promote entrepreneurship in the city and in the Hispanic community;
 - stronger leadership and staff for SPARK and the ecosystem; and
 - a commitment to sustain the WCC initiative.

Multiple stakeholders report expanded entrepreneurial activity and improved outcomes in Holyoke evidenced by the many Latino and women SPARK participants as well as new people participating in training workshops and other events. MSBDC and SCORE are working with more Holyoke entrepreneurs. Common Capital is seeing more applicants and making more loans in Holyoke, noting, "I never saw many applicants coming from Holyoke.... Over the past year I have seen an increase. We have three loans for SPARK graduates... [It] is a great indicator that they are pushing businesses with strong ideas through the program."

- ✓ **SPARK was the only one of the Round 1 cities to address explicitly racial equity in its shared result, a focus that proved challenging for the initiative despite some measurable progress.**

SPARK's genesis and shared result explicitly focus on addressing the city's disparity in small business ownership between Latino and white residents. Through partnerships, outreach, and developing a Spanish language curriculum, SPARK has worked to ensure that its training and entrepreneurial assistance benefits Latino city residents. Its results to date reflect progress on this score, as 59 percent of SPARK.Launch graduates are Hispanic. Nonetheless, the initiative still faces challenges overcoming the longstanding racial divide in Holyoke. Some SPARK partners expressed discomfort with a racial equity perspective that defines a goal focused exclusively on Latino business ownership. Within the Puerto Rican community, people view the chamber of commerce as a white organization, which has created some challenges in gaining recognition for SPARK's vision and legitimacy for addressing racial equity in Holyoke. In the past year, the leader of a Latino organization publicly critiqued SPARK as a primarily white organization that is working on equity for Latinos in Holyoke. In response to these issues, some SPARK stakeholders emphasized the "colorblind" nature of SPARK's work and the goal of creating 300 new businesses rather than affirming the racial equity orientation. Nonetheless, SPARK and the chamber of commerce have worked to include Latino businesses and community groups in SPARK's governance committee and in the chamber membership and committees, have expanded outreach to the Puerto Rican community, and have reached out to the community leader who critiqued SPARK's approach.

System changes related to the shared result

Several changes in perspective, relationships, and system boundaries have contributed to progress in strengthening the ecosystem.

- ✓ **More trust exists among the WCC partners, and they view each other as collaborators within a common ecosystem pursuing a shared mission.**

The chamber of commerce has made Latino business development a higher priority and has taken on a leadership role in SPARK to advance this goal. Stronger relationships exist among WCC partners, including HCC and Nuestras Raices, which are jointly implementing a culinary training program, and among SCORE, the chamber, and the city in supporting entrepreneurs and business development. System boundaries have expanded to include SCORE and MSBDC as active partners, several Latino businesses in leadership roles, and education and workforce development organizations directly involved in the entrepreneurial/business development system.

- ✓ **SPARK has contributed to a broader and more effective referral network to connect existing and aspiring entrepreneurs to services across organizations and sectors with a common intake form and introduction of a shared client management database.**

The increased communication and knowledge about services across organizations reduce duplication of services and provide for earlier and more effective referrals. SPARK also expanded the "activated" network for Holyoke entrepreneurs with MSBDC, SCORE, and Common Capital now more engaged in serving Holyoke businesses and collaborating to strengthen the overall ecosystem. The chamber of commerce also has a closer relationship with the city's office of Planning and Economic Development because of SPARK.

- ✓ **Stakeholders view SPARK as the point of entry for Holyoke entrepreneurs, and ecosystem partners and other organizations regularly refer potential entrepreneurs to SPARK's programs.**

Several partners noted this change, with one regional practitioner stating, "When we get a client thinking about starting a business in Holyoke, now we immediately talk to them about SPARK, tell them about SPARK... [and] make an initial email to Jona. We also added a new outreach location, twice a month in Holyoke." Another example of SPARK's status is that participation in its Soup networking and pitch events is now a requirement for the entrepreneurship class at HCC, and the SPARK.Launch class is also advertised in the community college class.

- ✓ **SPARK is generating increased interest in and attention to entrepreneurship throughout Holyoke.**

Several stakeholders noted that more organizations and leaders are talking about entrepreneurship and helping people in their networks to start a business. One stakeholder remarked, "You [are] seeing prioritization of entrepreneurship, not just in [SPARK's] discussions, but other organizations taking this on as a priority...the Holyoke Creative Arts Center is talking about entrepreneurship, Nueva Esperanza is talking about cultural creation and how do we help people in our community start businesses."

- ✓ **Changes in city policies and new city and state resource flows also contributed to SPARK's progress.**

The city's policy shift to allocate CDBG funding for business grants provided a valuable resource to help SPARK graduates launch their businesses. The simpler business certificate process that SPARK championed also reduced a bureaucratic barrier to formalizing a new enterprise. As noted above, the chamber's commitment and leadership role in SPARK is a policy change, and increased SCORE and MSBDC involvement in Holyoke has created new practices and resources that include expanded training workshops, business mentors and business counseling, and free one-year chamber memberships. Multiple state grants made directly to SPARK from the Urban Agenda, MGCC, and MassDevelopment have provided new business development resources to Holyoke.

- ✓ **Organizations representing the private sector have also made system changes aligned with SPARK goals.**

WCC has had a great impact on the Holyoke Chamber of Commerce and its foundation. The chamber now focuses more on growing its membership among Latino business, and the foundation has made entrepreneurial development a key priority. In addition, Easthampton Savings Bank is planning to open a Holyoke branch as a result of the advocacy of Harry Montalvo who sits on the ecosystem committee. He is also working on a program within the bank to offer business loans to graduates of the SPARK program who would not qualify for traditional loans. Additionally, Montalvo offered a four-hour financial literacy class to individuals who applied to but did not gain acceptance in the SPARK.Launch class. There were 14 participants, all of whom were either bilingual or Spanish speaking. Half of the class did not have a bank account going into the program. Easthampton Savings Bank offered a \$100 incentive to anyone who completed the class and then opened a checking account, which all participants did following the class. More than half of those participants are now regular customers of the bank.

✓ **Important changes in how SCORE works with Holyoke and other communities are an outgrowth of SPARK.**

Prior to SPARK, the western Massachusetts chapter of SCORE was not active in Holyoke. After Mayor Morse extended an invitation to work in Holyoke following a building collapse, SCORE Regional Director Len Gendron joined the ecosystem committee and become an active partner in SPARK. SCORE set up counseling services in Holyoke at the chamber offices and at the library, worked with SPARK to recruit more Latino mentors, raised funds to hold a Small Business Day in Holyoke in June 2017 and, for the most recent Launch class, is providing mentors to applicants who did not gain acceptance into the class. SCORE also altered its broader practices in two ways: 1) it now collaborates with and cosponsors workshops with the MSBDC; and 2) it advocates for applying the SPARK ecosystem approach in other communities in which it works.

Pathway to the 10-year shared result

Despite the measurable progress to date, Holyoke struggles to articulate how the progress thus far relates to a defined pathway to achieve the shared result. First, partners differ in how they articulate the long-term result. Some talk about percentage of Latino businesses, some the more general aggregate number of new businesses, and some focus more on a stronger entrepreneurial ecosystem. The larger issue, however, is that the group does not have a shared vision of the pathway that will enable it to achieve scale regardless of how it defines the end result. The team did increase the number of SPARK.Launch sessions out of stakeholder recognition that the initial scale of effort was insufficient to achieve the result. Yet, expansion of SPARK alone is solely a programmatic approach and does not constitute a full pathway toward the desired outcomes. The group may need to spend additional time articulating intended interim outcomes that bring to scale strategies to expand the pipeline of potential Holyoke and Latino entrepreneurs, offer financial supports for new entrepreneurs, and address space needs for the startups over the next several years. The new CRM system should provide the data that could help SPARK leaders think more broadly about new business creation beyond the outputs of SPARK.Launch and could be a useful spur to additional conversations about scale.

Beyond the logic and ambition of its strategies, to sustain and accelerate progress to its 10-year result, it is important to consider whether SPARK has built out a broad base of support within the community. This evaluation finds that while SPARK has increasingly taken some steps to reach out to a broader set of community leaders, there likely is more work that is necessary. The team developed a number of avenues for communication with the broader community in Years 2 and 3, including SPARK.Live events, Soup nights, the SPARK newsletter, and the revamped website. While these channels heightened awareness of the SPARK initiative, its partners, and activities, the communication focused less squarely on communicating initiative progress relative to its bold measurable result. Interviews conducted as part of this evaluation confirmed a general perspective that there needs to be more of an effort to explain/market SPARK and its value to the broader community. This is perhaps all the more important for SPARK since it appears that the collaborative has engaged a narrower set of stakeholders than the other Round 1 cities. This is evident in the pool of individuals and organizations SPARK designated to receive the WCC 2017 Stakeholder Survey. SPARK developed a list of survey recipients who would “likely be familiar with the goals, strategies, and accomplishments of SPARK and might have been influenced by SPARK in how they or their organization thinks or acts.” The intent was to include stakeholders represented on the core leadership team, any broader advisory committees, subcommittees, other implementation partners not formally represented on the governance structure, and members of networks or collaboratives not serving on the governance group but acting in an aligned capacity. From those categories, the SPARK team only noted 23 stakeholders to survey (as

compared to 50 in Chelsea, 63 in Fitchburg, and 43 in Lawrence). Since virtually all survey respondents considered themselves as engaged in the leadership of the initiative, the survey does not provide insight into the differing understandings or perceptions of those less engaged. Survey respondents are quite positive about the progress of the SPARK strategies, although it is unclear whether those who are less involved share this perception.

Interim outcomes related to the civic infrastructure

SPARK has impacted Holyoke's civic infrastructure in multiple ways, including strengthening cross-sector relationships, especially among participants on the governance board, nurturing new leadership, changing the culture and practices within organizations, and bringing new resources into Holyoke.

WCC's theory of change assumes that by building a cross-sector team to work toward Holyoke's shared result and applying WCC's core elements of collaborative leadership, community engagement, evidence-based learning, and system change in service of that shared result, that WCC can be a vehicle for improving Holyoke's civic infrastructure over a 10-year period. While just over a third of the way toward that 10-year vision, this evaluation looks at interim outcomes in Holyoke that suggest WCC is leading to improvements in the civic infrastructure. Since the cross-sector table is the foundation of each city's effort, the evaluation looks at how the work has led to expanded and sustained collaborative leadership. This evaluation also looks for interim outcomes related to the other core elements by initially looking at how the teams applied the core elements, what value they found in the use of those elements, and whether there is evidence that the use of the core elements is diffusing from being something that the WCC *team* does to something that is *embedded more deeply in the partner organizations*. Ultimately the goal is that the use of the four core elements becomes the way that Holyoke and the other working cities do business. Finally, this evaluation looks at what success the Holyoke team has had in generating additional external connections and resources. While the Boston Fed did not expressly communicate this as a priority to the Round 1 cities, the WCC theory of change identifies the ability to attract outside support to further community priorities as an indicator of a robust civic infrastructure.

The assessment, summarized in the rubric at the start of the case study, is based on a combination of data sources, including interviews and document reviews, but at times uses survey responses to provide objective indicators. The 2017 Survey of WCC Holyoke Stakeholders captures how the team's use of the core elements in pursuit of its shared result contributed to changes in perceptions, practices, policies, and resource flows that suggest positive improvements in the city's civic infrastructure. (See Holyoke survey tables 8-12 at the end of the case study.)

Expanded and sustained collaborative leadership

- ✓ **Collaborative leadership has been a central aspect of Holyoke's strategy and one that promises to be an important accelerator of its impact over time.**

SPARK launched as a cross-sector partnership with government, the business community, community organizations, and the education and workforce development sector. As the initiative increasingly focused on improving collaboration to strengthen the entrepreneurial development ecosystem, the mutual understanding, trust, and relationships among SPARK partners have grown.

SPARK has brought many organizations into the initiative that have worked together closely over the past three years with increasing attention to improving how they collaborate to support entrepreneurs

and how their resources can be deployed to advance SPARK's activities and long-term goal. In the initial period when SPARK's focus was on creating its programming, the partners functioned as a board or oversight committee to help design programs and supervise staff. Midway through the initiative, the partners' vision for the initiative and the nature of collaboration shifted to how they function as an ecosystem to nurture and support entrepreneurs in Holyoke. This changed how SPARK functions, as the governance committee worked to understand the services each partner could offer to entrepreneurs, to collectively identify and work to fill gaps in the ecosystem, and to rethink how partners work with each other to support entrepreneurs. SPARK partners have entered into a formal agreement on how they intend to work together, are working to implement a common intake form that all partners use during their initial contact with an entrepreneur, and are implementing a common Customer Relationship Management database platform to track their collective work with entrepreneurs. Another indicator of Holyoke's stronger collaborative leadership is partners' increased willingness to take on specific tasks (rather than looking to staff or a few partners to implement actions) and activate their resources to advance SPARK's goals. Examples include the library establishing a business resource center; SCORE recruiting more mentors and instructors for the Launch class; Easthampton Savings Bank offering a financial literacy class; and the city reprogramming CDBG funds for SPARK grants to entrepreneurs who have completed the SPARK.Launch class. Some results from the stronger collaboration are evident, such as the city grants helping several graduates get their business started, more Holyoke businesses receiving Common Capital loans, and new collaborative projects among SPARK partners.

- ✓ **A stronger collaborative culture has emerged with less competition among organizations for funding and more willingness to work with the city and among organizations to address problems.**

Mayor Morse believes that WCC has changed how organizations work with city government: "I think there's more of a climate where... because of our strong partnership on SPARK, that there's a perception that City Hall is a willing partner to their initiatives and goals." New collaborations have emerged out of the changed culture, and relationships have strengthened through SPARK. Holyoke Community College and Nuestras Raices collaborated to establish a new culinary training program in downtown Holyoke. There is also more collaboration between the education and entrepreneurial systems to expand ESOL programs for businesses, and participation in Holyoke Soup pitch events is now a requirement for the entrepreneurship class at HCC. Kathleen Anderson and Tessa Murphy-Romboletti now serve on the board of CareerPoint, Holyoke's career center, as a result of a relationship built through SPARK.

- ✓ **SPARK has begun to foster collaboration not only among individual organizations, but also among networks.**

The team has taken modest steps to increase the alignment with the work of other related networks in Holyoke, including the Innovation District Kitchen Cabinet and MassDevelopment's Transformative Development Initiative (TDI). The TDI fellow attends SPARK governance meetings. SPARK collaborated with these groups on the successful proposal for co-working space and advocated to combine the TDI fellow and Kitchen Cabinet staff position into a single job to serve their shared needs.

- ✓ **SPARK has contributed to leadership development by bringing several Latino and new business owners into leadership roles within the chamber of commerce and by engaging SPARK businesses in new roles.**

Maria Ferrer, a Latino business owner on the SPARK ecosystem board, is now a trustee of the Greater Holyoke Centennial Chamber Foundation board. Sheila Coon, an early graduate of SPARK.Launch and

owner of Hot Oven Cookies, now serves on the chamber's Marketing and Membership Committee. Several graduates of SPARK.Launch have taken on teaching and mentoring roles for subsequent classes, and some participate in community events, such as a weekly Family Fun Night held all summer and a three-day Celebrate Holyoke Festival. Their participation in these community events promotes awareness of entrepreneurs and allows them to contribute to their community. SPARK Initiative Director Tessa Murphy-Romboletti has become a more visible and trusted leader in Holyoke. She is working to bridge the historic divide between the white and Latino communities through regularly attending local church services, participating in events held by a network of professional Latina women, and joining in the Puerto Rican parrandas (caroling) during the holiday season.

Value and diffusion of core elements

Holyoke has applied WCC core elements in its work, although the team made more limited progress to date in the use of resident engagement and evidence-based learning. SPARK partners report having made policy, practice, and resource allocation changes to better incorporate each of the core elements in their organizations' work, although the percentage of partners noting such changes is generally lower than in the other Round 1 cities. While perhaps slower to implement policy or practice changes that reflect the core elements, SPARK partners saw dramatic increases in their perception of the importance of some of the core elements, a positive sign that they will likely embed the core elements more deeply in their organizations' work going forward.

✓ Community engagement was limited and primarily involved engaging businesses, not residents.

SPARK has worked to strengthen and broaden business engagement, and especially Latino businesses, in implementing SPARK and improving the overall ecosystem. SPARK's initial leaders worked to include several Latino businesses and business leaders on the governance committee. They are also recruiting existing businesses and SPARK.Launch graduates to serve as business mentors and instructors for future Launch sessions.

SPARK's resident engagement primarily involved strengthening community awareness of the initiative and identifying and recruiting entrepreneurs for the SPARK.Launch class and other SPARK activities. SPARK did not make any efforts to engage city residents in defining the core problem that the initiative seeks to address, the strategies it employs, or overall governance. Thus, it is not surprising that only 8 percent of survey respondents felt that community engagement had made a substantial impact on the outcomes of the initiative. The one way SPARK engages the broader community in its work is through Soup nights in which it invites the entire community to hear entrepreneurs present their business or project ideas and vote on the best business/project idea.

Most stakeholders acknowledged that SPARK has not done enough to engage the larger community in its work and needs to improve these efforts. Some recognize that more resident engagement is necessary to build a stronger communitywide entrepreneurship culture in Holyoke. Despite community engagement's fairly limited role in the SPARK initiative, partners appear to see its value. In fact, according to the survey, 54 percent of Holyoke respondents see seeking the perspective of a racially, ethnically, economically diverse body of residents to inform approaches as significantly more important than at the start of the initiative, the greatest increase of any of the Round 1 cities. In addition, 50 percent of survey respondents indicate that they have made some changes to systems within their organization to better engage residents.

- ✓ **It is unclear how Holyoke's fairly limited community engagement efforts thus far could have contributed to WCC's long-term vision of a civic infrastructure that empowers residents to participate in civic life and provides the mechanisms to do so.**

The WCC theory of change assumes that if the WCC city team's work in service of the shared result enlisted and responded to resident insight, and residents felt heard, engaged, and empowered in addressing this challenge, that they might be more apt to engage and tackle other challenges in the community in the future. But SPARK has yet to engage in the type of activities that might result in more engaged residents beyond participation in SPARK programs. Survey responses reflect the lack of attention focused on residents; only 8 percent of respondents strongly agree that the approach taken by SPARK was informed by residents whose lives will be impacted by the work. While SPARK has sponsored events to raise awareness of the initiative, it has not used these events to articulate the initiative's measurable progress toward the long-term result.

- ✓ **Holyoke has faced the greatest challenge in applying the evidence-based learning aspect of the WCC framework and, as a result, has been unable to more significantly embed the practice in the city's civic infrastructure.**

Despite its clear quantifiable long-term result, SPARK has neither consistently tracked progress toward this goal nor created data systems to capture the necessary data. One barrier is absence of city-level data and systems to track new business formation and the share that are Latino-owned. The team does track the demographics and outcomes from SPARK.Launch participants, but not the growth in new enterprises that are not a direct outcome of this program. Only 17 percent of the core team responded in the survey that they changed policies, practices, or resource allocations to better use data. Implementation of the shared CRM system will help address this gap through capturing business creation that results from the work of all SPARK partners. On the other hand, SPARK has used data to better understand business needs and barriers by means of conducting a business survey and has solicited participant feedback to continually improve the SPARK.Launch class. Approximately a third of survey respondents indicate that use of data made a substantial impact on the outcomes the team achieved.

- ✓ **SPARK partners embraced system change, which has become more important to their work as the initiative evolved from a programmatic to ecosystem orientation.**

SPARK has addressed system change in three ways. First, it has worked to change the perspectives and practices of the partner organizations to function as an integrated system to promote entrepreneurship and to support residents seeking to start and grow a business. This is the area where the most system change is occurring. A second focus is changing city policies and processes related to business regulation and support. An early effort succeeded in simplifying the process for a new business to obtain a city business certificate. Additional efforts to improve city permitting requirements and processes are underway, but will take more time as they require legislative changes by the city council and internal organizational changes. However, the presence of SPARK as a multistakeholder advocate for regulatory changes should help accelerate the progress. City policies on the use of CDBG funding also changed with the allocation of \$120,000 over two years to provide small business grants to SPARK.Launch graduates. Third, SPARK has identified system gaps in space availability and financing for new businesses and is working to address these gaps through financial literacy education, partnerships with a local CDFI (Common Capital), and plans for a downtown business co-working space. Roughly a third of partners feel that system change made a substantial impact on their outcomes to date, and

nearly 62 percent of all respondents see pursuing strategies to changing policies, practices, and funding flows as more important than they did at the start of WCC, the strongest change in perceptions among the Round 1 cities. This is a significant change in perspective since in the baseline survey only 25 percent of the responding stakeholders saw changes in policies and resource flows as a priority for the initiative to tackle.

New resources flowing into city

SPARK has brought new resources into Holyoke through expanded state government funding and increased services provided by several organizations. SPARK received over \$400,000 in state grants over three years:

- a two-year grant of \$250,000 in 2015 under the state Urban Agenda program, which provided flexible funding for multiple SPARK activities;
- a \$65,000 grant from MassDevelopment's TDI for work to advance small business space and micro-lending; and
- two small business technical assistance grants from the Massachusetts Growth Capital Corporation, \$90,000 (shared with Nuestras Raices) in 2016 and \$38,000 in 2017.

Small business development resources in Holyoke have expanded through new counseling, training, and lending activities by SCORE, MSBDC, and Common Capital that SPARK helped bring to the city. SCORE also helped organize and fund the Holyoke Small Business Day, held in June 2017.

Contextual factors contributing to progress

- ✓ **Mayoral leadership and commitment to the initiative has been an important positive factor from its inception.**

Mayor Morse convened organizations during the application process, prompting the creation of a collaborative proposal and setting the focus on entrepreneurial development. He continues to be a strong supporter of SPARK and has committed staff time, including active sustained engagement by Marcos Marrero, the planning and community development director, and CDBG funding to the initiative.

- ✓ **Holyoke is a resource-poor city with many nonprofit organizations, which increases competition for funding.**

This context makes raising local funding more challenging, increases dependence on state and philanthropic resources, and creates a competitive environment among organizations for funding. This environment affected how Holyoke first approached the WCC, with multiple organizations pursuing independent initiatives. The leadership of Mayor Morse and the ecosystem orientation and trust building that emerged over time have helped to overcome this situation, but limited philanthropic and foundation funding in Western Massachusetts continues to be a very competitive barrier.

- ✓ **Holyoke faces a social and geographic divide between the Latino and white communities.**

SPARK sought to bridge this divide by including Nuestras Raices as a partner in the initial application process and involving several Latino business leaders on the governance team. However, the divide remains a challenge to deep understanding, engagement, and support for SPARK within the Latino

community. SPARK's close association with the chamber of commerce and city government, historically white-led organizations, add to the challenges of overcoming this divide.

✓ **Internal staffing issues and dynamics within the partnership created multiple obstacles to progress.**

The original director helped get SPARK's programs established, but was not an effective leader for the ecosystem and finally stepped down. It took some time for the governance committee to reach this conclusion and to put a new director in place, which slowed progress for close to a year. The new director, on the other hand, is strongly rooted in Holyoke and has been more effective as a program and ecosystem leader, having a positive impact over the past ten months. A lack of participation from Nuestras Raices, despite its initial leadership role in the application, and the absence of other Latino community-based organizations in SPARK, impaired effective community engagement and gaining awareness and support for the program within this large segment of the city. It may also slow the identification and development of a pipeline of Latino entrepreneurs that SPARK seeks to nurture. SPARK is working to address this issue through inclusion of the OneHolyoke CDC on the governance committee, outreach to the leadership of Nueva Esperanza, and efforts of Tessa Murphy-Romboletti to regain the participation of Nuestras Raices' executive director in ecosystem meetings and other activities. It also took some time for the partnership and governance committee to assume their ecosystem perspective, build trust, and take on shared ownership for SPARK. In combination with the executive director weaknesses, this slowed progress over the first two years.

Staff and capacity changes have occurred at some partner organizations, including organizations that helped develop the initial application and were expected to be important WCC partners. Katie Stebbins, a key leader in planning SPARK, left her position at the Holyoke Innovation District in February 2015 for a state government position in Boston. Her successor, Samalid Hogan, later left to become Western Massachusetts regional director of the MSBDC and has remained part of the governance group. The Food and Fitness Council staff person who worked on the WCC application left the organization and was not replaced, which effectively ended its involvement in the initiative. Larry Bay, executive director of Holyoke Works, an adult education and workforce development affiliate of the chamber of commerce, passed away in April 2017. State government involvement in Holyoke increased with Holyoke's designation as a TDI district by MassDevelopment and the hiring of a new full-time TDI fellow.

Internal issues within organizations have also impacted SPARK. The Greater Holyoke Chamber Centennial Foundation, although an important initial partner and fiscal agent for WCC, did not originally assume a strong leadership role in SPARK, which left the initiative more dependent on staff leadership and affected how other organizations related to the initiative. Turnover of staff at Holyoke Works, with Larry Bay's death, affected its participation and slowed efforts to sustain an ESOL program for business owners. Some stakeholders attribute Nuestras Raices' lack of participation in SPARK to internal capacity and leadership issues within the organization.

Interventions of the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston

SPARK's leadership valued the coaching, reporting framework, and consulting assistance the WCC provided. The regular check-in calls afforded honest feedback to the staff and leadership and helped to keep Holyoke focused and accountable for its work plan and goals. The assistance and retreats Pat Bowie facilitated were especially helpful to SPARK in addressing key challenges and propelling the initiative forward. Some leaders were less enthusiastic about other WCC interventions. The frequency of and time commitment required to attend learning communities and daylong sessions in eastern

Massachusetts were burdensome and resulted in lost time at their organizations for some SPARK partners, and Holyoke viewed the trainings around community engagement as less relevant, with its initiative focused on small businesses.

Conclusion

SPARK is reaching its intended market of Latino and Holyoke entrepreneurs and has achieved modest progress toward its shared 10-year result. However, it has built a solid foundation for accelerated progress in the future and has contributed to stronger civic infrastructure in Holyoke with expanded relationships among sectors and organizations, new collaborations, additional state and regional resources invested in the city, and promoting changes within partner organizations.

Sustainability

Holyoke has made considerable progress in establishing the foundations for reaching its long-term result. A strong collaboration across organizations and sectors now exists to support entrepreneurs and new business creation that is leveraging new resources from federal, state, and regional resource providers. A clear pathway with training and financial resources to support aspiring and existing entrepreneurs exists, along with new efforts to identify and promote entrepreneurial activity. SPARK is continuing work to address system barriers around regulation, space, education, and financial literacy.

SPARK leadership recognizes the need to accelerate its activities and outcomes to achieve its shared result, and has made changes toward this end, but still lacks a clear pathway to the long-term result. Key changes to increase progress include: (1) creating a new screening process to focus the SPARK.Launch class on start-up ready entrepreneurs; (2) providing start-up grants to new entrepreneurs; and (3) creating a co-working space to house and grow new entrepreneurs in Holyoke. These changes are likely to increase outcomes from the SPARK.Launch class, but there needs to be a large expansion in the pipeline of entrepreneurs, the number and/or size of Launch classes each year, and funds for micro-grants to reach the shared result. Based on the 47 percent start-up rate among SPARK.Launch graduates to date and 267 start-ups needed over the next seven years to reach the 10-year goal of 300 new businesses, SPARK needs to generate annual outcomes equivalent to its cumulative outcomes over the first three-and-a-half years. A specific plan to achieve this scale-up of Launch cohorts and associated resources is not in place.

A key challenge for SPARK in reaching its 10-year result is securing the funding to sustain and scale its activities, especially the SPARK.Launch class and business grants, to triple the current pace of outcomes. SPARK has hired a consultant, purchased a two-year subscription to a grant-researching database, and started work to formulate a fundraising strategy. It is considering new sources of revenue, i.e., rental income from its co-working space, along with grants. Its funding needs are considerable for a city and region with very limited philanthropic resources. The strong political and local institutional support for sustaining SPARK is a positive factor in its favor and may allow SPARK to emerge as a shared citywide priority for both local funding commitments and external grant development and fundraising.

Major learning

The main lesson cited by almost all stakeholders is the importance of involving and building collaboration among the many partners required for an effective business development ecosystem and the difficulty, messiness, and patience needed to establish the collaboration. Holyoke has persisted in this work and has not let the challenges and frustrations in the process derail it.

- ✓ **Partners need to have specific roles and tasks to keep them involved and to leverage their resources.**

After the early challenges that partners faced in launching SPARK and overcoming staffing problems, Holyoke has succeeded at sustaining a large collaborative and leveraging partners' resources. Through staff leadership and developing a good understanding of both entrepreneurs' needs and partners' resources, SPARK has been able to set clear roles for many partners within the ecosystem, e.g., providing English language training, offering business mentoring, creating a resource center, and assigning program- and project-related tasks.

- ✓ **Careful vetting and targeting of program resources to entrepreneurs who are likely to start a business is important to achieving their long-term result.**

Holyoke's program has evolved to target more resources to entrepreneurs who are most likely to start a business in Holyoke and thus advance its long-term result. This includes adding grants and post-graduation assistance to SPARK. Launch entrepreneurs who complete the program and a more careful assessment of applicants' commitment and readiness to start their business following the program.

- ✓ **Strong and sustained support from political leaders, particularly mayors, is invaluable to initiating and sustaining cross-sector collaboration.**

Mayor Morse's leadership was critical in bringing partners together to work collaboratively on the WCC application and overcoming a traditional "divide up the pie" approach to the grant opportunity. His continued support and championing of SPARK, including the commitment of scarce city funds and staff resources to the initiative, was key to convening cross-sector organizations and sustaining their engagement through the challenging work of collaboration and systems change.

- ✓ **Attracting and capitalizing on non-local resources is important for poor communities.**

SCORE, MSBDC, Common Capital, and state grant programs made important contributions to SPARK. A well thought out and explicit strategy to identify which organizations have valuable resources and how the initiative can align with and engage these resources can accelerate progress and could be part of the early work of WCC initiatives.

Holyoke Survey Results

Overview

Survey Overview	
Invitations sent	23
Complete responses	12
Incomplete responses	3
Response rate	65%

Profile of stakeholder engagement

Table 1. Involvement in SPARK (n=15)		
Involvement	Frequency	Percentage
I have played a leadership role, overseeing the direction and implementation of the work.	7	47%
I have served on a committee, workgroup, or advisory group to SPARK.	11	73%
I worked on a specific program or project.	5	33%
I have been directly involved in the work of SPARK in some other way.	5	33%
I have not been directly involved in the work of SPARK.	0	0%
Total	28	

Source: Analysis of the Working Cities Challenge Final Survey: Holyoke. See Question 1 (Check all that apply).

Table 2. Length of involvement in SPARK (n=15)		
Length of time	Frequency	Percentage
Less than six months ago	0	0%
More than six months ago but less than a year	1	7%
Between one and two years ago	5	33%
More than two years ago	9	60%
Total	15	

Source: Analysis of the Working Cities Challenge Final Survey: Holyoke. See Question 2.

Table 3. Functioning of the team leading SPARK							
		Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know	Total
Organizations involved SPARK trust each other to share information and to provide honest feedback	Frequency	0	0	3	9	0	12
	Percentage	0%	0%	25%	75%	0%	
Organizations involved in SPARK have open discussions about difficult issues	Frequency	0	0	1	11	0	12
	Percentage	0%	0%	8%	92%	0%	
Participation in SPARK is not dominated by any one stakeholder group or sector	Frequency	0	0	4	7	1	12
	Percentage	0%	0%	33%	58%	8%	
Organizations involved in SPARK share responsibility for the work and hold themselves accountable for achieving the desired results	Frequency	0	0	9	3	0	12
	Percentage	0%	0%	75%	25%	0%	
Over the course of the initiative, new partners have been welcomed and invited to participate in the leadership of SPARK	Frequency	0	0	1	11	0	12
	Percentage	0%	0%	8%	92%	0%	

Source: Analysis of the Working Cities Challenge Final Survey: Holyoke. See Question 18.

Assessment of Shared Result

Table 4. Expression of key result (10-year goal) of SPARK

Connectivity.	Create 300 new Latino-owned businesses.
300 new businesses in Holyoke.	Creation of 300 new small businesses in 10 years.
Helping to establish brick and mortar businesses in Holyoke with a focus on economic empowerment of the Latino community.	Creating more new businesses while encouraging a more cohesive business community.
Improving access for entrepreneurship training to low-income residents of Holyoke	Create new Latino businesses in downtown.
More small businesses in Holyoke equals more people working.	New Holyoke businesses, particularly Latino owned businesses
300 new businesses that reflect the diversity of the city's population.	Growing 300 new businesses in 10 years, primarily Latino businesses. Help support the startup

Source: Analysis of the Working Cities Challenge Final Survey: Holyoke. See Question 5.

Table 5. SPARK's result (10-year goal)

		Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know	Total
The selected result helped focus the team's effort	Frequency	0	0	3	9	0	12
	Percentage	0%	0%	25%	75%	0%	
The selected result helped the team to gather the "right" people at the table	Frequency	0	0	2	10	0	12
	Percentage	0%	0%	17%	83%	0%	
The selected result addresses a critical challenge for our city	Frequency	0	0	0	12	0	12
	Percentage	0%	0%	0%	100%	0%	
The selected result enabled the team to readily measure and communicate progress	Frequency	0	0	6	6	0	12
	Percentage	0%	0%	50%	50%	0%	

Source: Analysis of the Working Cities Challenge Final Survey: Holyoke. See Question 19.

Table 6. Organizations' sense of responsibility to achieve shared result (n=12)

	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Disagree	1	8%
Somewhat Disagree	1	8%
Somewhat Agree	2	17%
Strongly Agree	8	67%
Don't Know	0	0%
Total	12	

Source: Analysis of the Working Cities Challenge Final Survey: Holyoke. See Question 6.

Table 7. Perceived progress by grouped SPARK strategy

		No Progress	Limited Progress	Substantial Progress	Do Not Know	N/A	Total
Offering classes and other business assistance	Frequency	1	4	11	0	0	16
	Percentage	6%	25%	69%	0%	0%	
Collaboration, networking, outreach	Frequency	0	2	9	0	0	11
	Percentage	0%	18%	82%	0%	0%	
Other	Frequency	0	0	3	0	0	3
	Percentage	0%	0%	100%	0%	0%	

Source: Analysis of the Working Cities Challenge Final Survey: Holyoke. See Question 7a.

Table 8. Approaches to the work and perceived contributions to outcomes of SPARK

		Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know	Total			Large Negative Impact	Modest Negative Impact	No Impact	Modest Positive Impact	Large Positive Impact	Don't Know	Total
SPARK established a diverse, cross-sector collaborative of leaders	Frequency	1	0	4	7	0	12	What difference did this make (positively or negatively) in the outcomes of the work?	Frequency	0	0	0	8	4	0	12
	Percentage	8%	0%	33%	58%	0%			Percentage	0%	0%	0%	67%	33%	0%	
The approach taken by SPARK was informed by residents whose lives will be impacted by the work	Frequency	0	1	9	1	1	12	What difference did this make (positively or negatively) in the outcomes of the work?	Frequency	0	0	2	8	1	1	12
	Percentage	0%	8%	75%	8%	8%			Percentage	0%	0%	17%	67%	8%	8%	
SPARK has increased resident engagement and leadership on key issues impacting the city	Frequency	0	1	4	3	4	12	What difference did this make (positively or negatively) in the outcomes of the work?	Frequency	0	1	1	4	2	4	12
	Percentage	0%	8%	33%	25%	33%			Percentage	0%	8%	8%	33%	17%	33%	
SPARK regularly uses data to refine strategies	Frequency	0	1	6	4	1	12	What difference did this make (positively or negatively) in the outcomes of the work?	Frequency	0	0	0	6	4	2	12
	Percentage	0%	8%	50%	33%	8%			Percentage	0%	0%	0%	50%	33%	17%	
SPARK has pursued system-oriented strategies such as changing policies, practices, or funding flows.	Frequency	0	1	3	5	3	12	What difference did this make (positively or negatively) in the outcomes of the work?	Frequency	0	1	0	4	4	3	12
	Percentage	0%	8%	25%	42%	25%			Percentage	0%	8%	0%	33%	33%	25%	
SPARK has facilitated new or deeper relationships among organizations in the city and/or catalyzed changed perspectives among local leaders	Frequency	0	0	1	10	1	12	What difference did this make (positively or negatively) in the outcomes of the work?	Frequency	0	0	1	4	6	1	12
	Percentage	0%	0%	8%	83%	8%			Percentage	0%	0%	8%	33%	50%	8%	

Source: Analysis of the Working Cities Challenge Final Survey: Holyoke. See Questions 12-17a.

Outcomes

Table 9. Changes in organizations' policies, practices, or allocation of resources influenced by SPARK (n=20)

		Yes	No	Don't Know	Total
Changed policies, practices, or resource allocations (human or financial) to develop stronger collaborations with other leaders or leading organizations in the city	Frequency	9	3	0	12
	Percentage	75%	25%	0%	
Changed policies, practices, or resource allocations (human or financial) to better engage residents	Frequency	6	6	0	12
	Percentage	50%	50%	0%	
Changed policies, practices, or resource allocations (human or financial) to better use data	Frequency	3	7	2	12
	Percentage	25%	58%	17%	
Changed policies, practices, or resource allocations (human or financial) in support of the goals pursued by SPARK	Frequency	9	2	1	12
	Percentage	75%	17%	8%	

Source: Analysis of the Working Cities Challenge Final Survey: Holyoke. See Question 11.

Table 9a. Changes in organizations' policies, practices, or resource allocations. (n=8)

Improved business registry process, are working on improving multiple permitting structures.	We have changed our workforce training programs to better align with emerging industries as uncovered by SPARK and to provide more training of incumbent workers as requested by employers.
We participate in more workshops, reaching Latino clients, recently became member of chamber.	Creating new financial program for small businesses.
We have assigned a business advisor from the MSBDC to help SPARK participants and participate in all ecosystem meetings. Prior to this assignment, our involvement was limited to ecosystem meetings. Now we are more involved in mentoring and working directly with the participants while they are going through the program.	Have 50 percent Latino staff, have information laying around for the entrepreneur that walks in, established a special rate for membership to the chamber for entrepreneurs, also give a free membership to any SPARK Launch class grad, support SPARK financially with our foundation.
We have integrated forms and information to be a referral source for SPARK, and by so doing increased staff awareness of assisting our low-income residents in this activity.	Primarily through allocation of staff time to the SPARK project itself.

Source: Analysis of the Working Cities Challenge Final Survey: Holyoke. See Question 11a.

Table 10. Change in organizational engagement with community outside of SPARK since 2014 (n=14)

		Significantly Less Engaged	Somewhat Less Engaged	No Change	Somewhat More Engaged	Significantly More Engaged	N/A
Cities Agencies	Frequency	0	0	3	6	2	3
	Percentage	0%	0%	21%	43%	14%	21%
State or regional agencies	Frequency	0	0	4	5	2	3
	Percentage	0%	0%	29%	36%	14%	21%
Financial Institutions (e.g., banks, CDFIs)	Frequency	0	0	5	6	1	1
	Percentage	0%	0%	38%	46%	8%	8%
City nonprofit organizations	Frequency	0	0	4	3	5	1
	Percentage	0%	0%	38%	46%	8%	8%
Business/employers in your city	Frequency	0	0	4	6	3	1
	Percentage	0%	0%	29%	43%	21%	7%
Grassroots organizations/ resident groups	Frequency	0	0	5	3	2	1
	Percentage	0%	0%	38%	23%	31%	8%
Educational Institutions	Frequency	0	0	4	4	4	1
	Percentage	0%	0%	31%	31%	31%	8%
Foundations (local, regional, national)	Frequency	0	0	3	3	6	1
	Percentage	0%	0%	23%	23%	46%	8%

Source: Analysis of the Working Cities Challenge Final Survey: Holyoke. See Question 3.

Table 11. Change in personal beliefs around community change since 2014 (n=13)							
		Significantly Less Important	Somewhat Less Important	No Change	Somewhat More Important	Significantly More Important	N/A
Sharing decision-making and responsibility with other organizations	Frequency	0	0	2	5	6	0
	Percentage	0%	0%	15%	38%	46%	0%
Seeking out leaders who represent the racial and ethnic diversity of the city	Frequency	0	0	3	4	6	0
	Percentage	0%	0%	23%	31%	46%	0%
Seeking the perspective of a racially, ethnically, economically diverse body of residents to inform approaches to improve the city	Frequency	0	0	3	3	7	0
	Percentage	0%	0%	23%	23%	54%	0%
Pursuing strategies to support resident empowerment/ leadership	Frequency	0	0	2	2	9	0
	Percentage	0%	0%	15%	15%	69%	0%
Using "data" to develop strategies, assess progress, inform learning, catalyze adaptation and innovation	Frequency	0	0	1	8	4	0
	Percentage	0%	0%	8%	62%	31%	0%
Building new relationships with individuals and/or organizations or bringing different types of organizations into problem-solving discussions	Frequency	0	0	1	5	7	0
	Percentage	0%	0%	8%	38%	54%	0%
Pursuing strategies to change policies, practices, funding flows	Frequency	0	0	0	5	8	0
	Percentage	0%	0%	0%	38%	62%	0%

Source: Analysis of the Working Cities Challenge Final Survey: Holyoke. See Question 4.

Table 12. Influence of SPARK on the city of Holyoke (n=12)				
		Yes	No	No Opinion
Holyoke is better off because of SPARK.	Frequency	10	1	1
	Percentage	83%	8%	8%
Low-income people in Holyoke are better off today because of SPARK.	Frequency	8	2	2
	Percentage	67%	17%	17%
SPARK has started making longer-term changes that will benefit low-income people in the region in the next 5-10 years.	Frequency	10	0	1
	Percentage	91%	0%	9%

Source: Analysis of the Working Cities Challenge Final Survey: Holyoke. See Questions 8-10a.

Table 12a. How Holyoke is or is not better off because of SPARK

There is somewhere for residents to get easy, friendly, approachable access to business development that can introduce them to a network of support.	There's a central place to turn to when starting your business planning; broader sense that business can start here more easily.	Holyoke really needed an entrepreneurship initiative. Without it, there would be no place to go for this type of focused business education in the city that I'm aware of.
Today there is more awareness of business community as an ecosystem. Everyone is connected. Everyone has a brighter future for their own business when we work together.	Actual new businesses are up and running. This is a known and accessed resource for aspiring entrepreneurs.	Grassroots access to participation in the "innovation economy" being promoted by the city—diversity of business offerings.
For business community yes, now existing businesses have something to count on it.	It is providing a program that previously did not exist. Small business education and opportunity recognition.	SPARK is an incredible resource and it's critical to have a central place to direct entrepreneurs.
The partners have been determined to succeed in spite of very limited funding and very high levels of poverty-related complications in participants' lives	The city had no programs or help for the small startup. This program has shown that the city promotes and supports small businesses and small business startups. We have new entrepreneurs opening their doors especially in downtown Holyoke that has seen very little new business startups.	

Source: Analysis of the Working Cities Challenge Final Survey: Holyoke. See Question 8a.

Table 13. Future work of SPARK

		Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know	Total
I believe that the group of organizations collaborating on SPARK will still be working together toward the desired result three years from now	Frequency	0	0	3	9	0	12
	Percentage	0%	0%	25%	75%	0%	
If a new mayor is elected in my city next year, the work of SPARK will continue to move forward	Frequency	0	0	3	8	1	12
	Percentage	0%	0%	25%	67%	8%	
My city has a group of rising, talented civic leaders poised to make a difference in my community over the next decade	Frequency	0	2	2	7	1	12
	Percentage	0%	17%	17%	58%	8%	
If my city faced an unexpected economic, physical, or social shock (e.g., loss of major employer, sudden rise in high school dropout rates, etc.), the civic leadership in my city could respond quickly and capably to the challenge	Frequency	0	2	4	3	3	12
	Percentage	0%	17%	33%	25%	25%	

Source: Analysis of the Working Cities Challenge Final Survey: Holyoke. See Question 20.