

A vertical image on the left side of the page shows a chain of stylized human figures made of brown paper, holding hands and standing on a dark surface. The figures are arranged in a line, with their arms raised and hands clasped. The background is a textured, light brown color. The text 'Replicating Social Programs' is overlaid on the bottom half of this image.

Replicating Social Programs

The Challenge

Given the wide disparity between any social problem and the resources and tools to combat it, one might expect replication to be a standard response when it's clear that a particular program or approach is effective. This is not the case. Social programs occasionally get replicated—but often in the face of serious resistance and usually with, at best, modest success. The reasons are several and include insufficient philanthropic and public financing devoted to the expansion of proven programs. However, P/PV's experience indicates that the most significant obstacle is the simple belief that “replication” is too rigid a concept to be useful in dealing with the unique aspects of each community. Therefore the wheel is constantly being reinvented.

Our experience shows that, in fact, any successful replication must account for critical local uniqueness. What it must not do is have its core elements undercut by noncritical local variations—a common occurrence in the replication of social programs. There are ways to ensure a proper balance. The business sector learned these lessons long ago; the nonprofit sector is in the early stages of adopting them now.

How We Can Help

Historically, there has been very little guidance and expertise available to social programs to direct them on a secure path of growth. A great idea that works in one place is not easily duplicated in another without the right processes, structures and strategies in place.

Furthermore, there may be a basic misunderstanding of exactly what replication is. Replication is not about replicating programs; it's about reproducing results. If you don't know what the results are, or how to effectively and efficiently achieve them, good replication is impossible to attain.

To fill the gap, P/PV assists organizations with several key tasks:

Define a Program's Essential Elements

Knowing how a program works and why it works the way it does is an indispensable first step in any successful replication. By looking closely at a program's framework and implementation history, we identify key components that will be necessary to include when replicating the program in new sites. This process can also be a valuable precursor to rigorous evaluation—helping programs pinpoint the elements that are best suited for testing.

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Plan for a Program's Growth

Growth planning is another vital step for any program desiring to expand its reach. After defining a set of essential elements—and when it's clear that a program is ready—P/PV develops a concrete, user-friendly manual to guide the implementation process in new communities. Designed to foster effective and cost-efficient implementation, the manual includes important start-up information on selecting implementing agencies and target areas, and developing staffing requirements, performance measures, etc. Next, we create a training curriculum for all future program sites to ensure that the program's content and staffing skills are uniform. This not only encourages fidelity to the program model but is essential in providing quality technical assistance during early start-up.

Manage a Program's National Replication

After a growth plan has been completed and an evaluation showing evidence of effectiveness has been carried out, a program may be ready for national replication. P/PV can help craft and, if needed, manage a national replication strategy that deals with both the internal capability of the original program to go to scale and the external market for the program.

We typically start our work with a full replication assessment, which takes into consideration a variety of factors that are often overlooked in the excitement of trying to bring a promising program to scale. When the assessment reveals that replication is both desirable and feasible, we help programs create the internal structures and on-the-ground implementation processes needed to ensure effective replication on a large scale.

P/PV's Experience

P/PV has a distinct replication and expansion staff and a long record of successful program replications. We've worked with a wide variety of nonprofit and philanthropic organizations and a diverse array of programs, including:

- **The Nurse-Family Partnership**—developed by Dr. David Olds, funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation
- **Plain Talk**—developed and funded by the Annie E. Casey Foundation
- **The National Adolescent Sexuality Training Center**—developed by Michael Carrera for the Children's Aid Society, funded by the Robin Hood Foundation
- **Community@Work**—a program of the Transitional Work Corporation, funded by The Pew Charitable Trusts
- **Neighborhood Health Messenger Program**—developed and funded by the Annie E. Casey Foundation
- **Koshland Civic Unity Program**—a program of the San Francisco Community Foundation, funded by the Annie E. Casey Foundation

P/PV's experience with the **Nurse-Family Partnership** (NFP) program is particularly notable. Since 1997, we have assisted the NFP in implementing its evidence-based nurse home-visiting program in nearly 300 communities in 22 states. Another significant project is the national replication of **Plain Talk**. P/PV is taking the lead role in managing the replication of this teen pregnancy prevention program for the Annie E. Casey Foundation. More information about these projects is available on our website, www.ppv.org.

For more information about P/PV's replication services, contact Geri Summerville at 215-557-4479 or gsummerville@ppv.org.



Public/Private Ventures is a national nonprofit organization that seeks to improve the effectiveness of social policies and programs. P/PV designs, tests and studies initiatives that increase supports, skills and opportunities of residents of low-income communities; works with policymakers to see that the lessons and evidence produced are reflected in policy; and provides training, technical assistance and learning opportunities to practitioners based on documented effective practices.

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