



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 may be 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:

### *Defining 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 are 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.

## Planning 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.

## Managing 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.



Public/Private Ventures is a national leader in creating and strengthening programs that improve lives in low-income communities. We do this in three ways:

### INNOVATION

We work with leaders in the field to identify promising existing programs or develop new ones.

### RESEARCH

We rigorously evaluate these programs to determine what is effective and what is not.

### ACTION

We reproduce model programs in new locations, provide technical assistance where needed and inform policymakers and practitioners about what works.

P/PV is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, nonpartisan organization with offices in Philadelphia, New York City and Oakland. For more information, please visit [www.ppv.org](http://www.ppv.org).

## 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 and Edna McConnell Clark foundations. The Nurse-Family Partnership has been tested through a succession of three clinical trials and found to produce substantial and enduring improvements in the health, well-being and self-sufficiency of low-income first-time parents and their children. P/PV has been involved with the replication of this outstanding program for more than a decade, helping expand it to more than 350 counties in 28 states across the nation.
- **Plain Talk**, developed and funded by the Annie E. Casey Foundation. The Plain Talk program seeks to increase parental involvement and adult/teen communication about sex. P/PV developed Plain Talk's national replication, including the creation of implementation and training materials, site selection processes and data collection systems.
- **The National Adolescent Sexuality Training Center**, developed by Michael Carrera for the Children's Aid Society, funded by the Robin Hood Foundation. The program operates from the premise that there are no "quick fixes" to teen pregnancy and thus seeks to involve young people over several years in a comprehensive range of activities and services. P/PV prepared a replication assessment and growth plan for this well-regarded initiative.
- **Community@Work**, a program of the Transitional Work Corporation. Community@Work uses a transitional jobs model to provide opportunities and support for people seeking economic self-sufficiency. P/PV's replication assessment of this program was funded by The Pew Charitable Trusts.
- **The Wilson Commencement Park Program (WCP)**, developed and funded by the Marie C. and Joseph C. Wilson Foundation. Based in Rochester, NY, WCP is a residential program that offers services to low-income single parents and their children, designed to foster family stability, increase economic independence and strengthen the community. P/PV conducted a replication assessment and created a detailed implementation manual for the program.

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