

Strategic Collaborations

Zip Code Assistance Ministries Organizational Development Program (ZCAM ODP)

The Zip Code Assistance Ministries Organizational Development Program (ZCAM ODP) was a pilot program developed and implemented by Rockwell Fund, Inc. (RFI) as lead funder, along with a collaboration of Houston area funders, technical assistance partners and social purpose ministries. The participating ministries are known as Zip Code Assistance Ministries (ZCAMs) because of their service areas.

ZCAM ODP marked the first time a collaborative of foundations in Houston offered multi-year operating support for ZCAMs. This multi-year commitment enabled the funders collaborative to concentrate its support and help build the capacity of a limited number of groups, while also building an atmosphere of funder/grantee relationships that exceeded traditional, transactional grantmaking. Sixteen Houston area funders pooled over \$2.3 million to support eight ZCAMs from 2004-2007, with RFI investing \$675,000 (plus \$15,500 of in-kind support through office space; extensive staff time was also dedicated to the project), for the purpose of significantly increasing the capacity of social purpose ministries to meet the community's basic needs through strengthening organizational infrastructure, enhancing service delivery and developing new service partnerships.

The program provided grants, training and consulting, and relationship building opportunities that enabled the assistance ministries to receive the tools and resources they needed to “do more mission”, while also building on the organizations' assets. Following the successes of the pilot, participating funders and ministries committed to continuing the capacity building gains made through ZCAM ODP by forming the Alliance of Community Assistance Ministries of Greater Houston (ACAM).

Rockwell's partnership with the ZCAMs have been established over time, with Rockwell Fund awarding grants to ZCAMs totaling approximately \$1 million for operating, capital, and program support from 1985 to 2004. Of the 20 identified ministries in the Houston Metropolitan area, RFI has made grants to twelve. Other Houston foundations have a similar history with the ZCAMs, while some had not funded them prior to ZCAM ODP.

A 2003 RFI grant to Interfaith Community Ministry Network (ICMN) provided scholarships for local social purpose ministry staff to attend a Points of Light Foundation (POLF) annual conference. The scholarship recipients expressed gratitude, enthusiasm and the tangible benefits from the conference in their thank you notes. RFI became aware of the great demand for education and training for ministry staff and embarked on an effort to gauge the ministries' interest in development of a formal structure to connect and train local ministry staff. RFI was also drawn to investing in the ministries because of their many assets: the network of ministries was supported by over 250 faith congregations, engaged over 8,000 volunteers in service to their community and served over 300,000 individuals a year. Over time, other Houston funders became interested in the program's potential and joined as members of the Funders Collaborative.

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Zip Code Assistance Ministries Organizational Development Program (continued)

In the program development phase of ZCAM ODP, Rockwell staff combed through the research on nonprofit capacity building, faith-based organizations, funding collaboratives, program evaluation and other related topics. Staff also talked to local and national experts in these areas to gain further insights into what program components could be developed as part of the pilot. Rockwell then partnered with United Way of the Texas Gulf Coast's Management Assistance Program, which held focus groups composed of ministry leaders to explore the concept of a pilot capacity building initiative. The focus groups revealed the challenges faced by the ministries, including the fact that most ministries were experiencing a great increase in demand for services, which has led to increased stress to organizational budgets and staff; many were seeing a growing number of Hispanic (Spanish-speaking only) clients, but were unprepared to provide bilingual services; ministry leaders were grappling with issues related to human resources, volunteer management, management of their social enterprises (thrift stores), client and data management and board development; and leaders had a desire to focus on long term strategies, but insufficient resources require them to constantly deal with emergencies.

From the literature review, expert interviews and focus group feedback, RFI developed a grant program that combined cash grant awards, coupled with targeted technical assistance over a three year period for the purpose of building organizational capacity. ZCAM ODP also created a language for talking about nonprofit capacity building, known as the "Nine Elements of Organizational Capacity", which allowed ministries and funders to discuss, learn about and gauge capacity building progress. The nine elements, which are hallmarks of a healthy nonprofit, are:

- Effective Board leadership
- Effective Executive Director leadership
- Sufficient and sustainable funding
- High quality service delivery
- Skilled personnel
- Effective communication and information
- Technology capacity commensurate with need
- Adequate physical space
- Credibility in the community

By funding projects targeted at improving these nine element areas, the funders aimed to give ministries the tools they need to expand their programs to serve more people in need and create a fluid partnership between funders and nonprofit service organizations. Funders, ministries and program partners established three overall goals for the project:

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Goal 1: Development of relationships between and among ministries, funders and partners

Goal 2: Increased effectiveness of ZCAMs based on the Nine Elements

Goal 3: Increased participation in relevant collaboratives

A sampling of results in these goal areas from the ZCAM pilot program include:

- Half experienced increases in congregations and congregation contributions; increases ranged from 3% to 31%.
- The network of ministries raised \$1 million from new sources in response to the ZCAM Match Grant Challenge.
- All increased Resale Store revenues; the range of increases across ZCAMs was from 1% to 33%.
- All experienced significant increases in the number of volunteers and volunteer hours: the average increase was 47%.
- All demonstrate a significant increase in the ability to collect, handle and report data including service delivery and financial reporting. Over half are now able to report unduplicated numbers.
- Ministries have developed over 15 new service partnerships over the past 3 years to expand or bring new programming to clients.
- Ministries piloted new service models to better serve clients, such as a family mentoring program and an onsite mental health collaboration.
- Data from the current Evaluation Report is replete with references by EDs and Funders about the relevance, effectiveness and outcomes of the ODP activities that have been focused on the development of relationships within the groups (EDs and Funders) and between these groups.
- A comprehensive external evaluation report will be available later this year.

Energized by the successes of ZCAM ODP, participating funders and ministries explored the feasibility of formalizing a network of faith-based service providers before the pilot phase ended in December 2007. Six months of focused inquiry, discussion and planning resulted in development of The Alliance of Community Assistance Ministries of Greater Houston (ACAM), a legacy of ZCAM ODP.

Mission: To provide social purpose ministries with a professional forum to strengthen their capacity to fulfill their mission.

Vision: A high performing network of social purpose ministries, funders, and community partners, who, through synergistic alliances, will affect change for those in need.

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Zip Code Assistance Ministries Organizational Development Program (continued)

What it is: A membership organization of 501(c) (3) faith-based emergency service providers. Prospective members are faith-based in mission and vision, without requiring a particular expression of faith as a basis for receiving services. “Emergency service providers” provide two or more of the following: food, case management, clothing, employment services, financial assistance for rent and/or utilities, school supplies/uniforms or transportation.

What it offers:

Best Practices Program: To educate and promote sound practices in nonprofit operations and programming. Activities include: organizational assessments, stipends for training and consulting and grants to develop organizational infrastructure and service models that address the root causes of poverty.

Network Development: To maintain and expand the social capital the Zip Code Assistance Ministries Organizational Development Program (ZCAM ODP) has generated by including new members. This component will facilitate professional peer networks for the following cohorts: executive directors, congregational liaisons/volunteer coordinators, board members, emergency service program directors and thrift store managers.

Awareness and Education: This component is aimed at increasing membership by reaching out to underserved areas and raising the profile of assistance ministries as service hubs in their communities. Another function is to raise awareness around the issues affecting the client population served by the ministries for the purpose of rallying support for initiatives and funding that will provide pathways out of poverty for the ministries’ clients.

How it works: ACAM is structured similarly to ZCAM ODP – funds are located at, and managed by, the Greater Houston Community Foundation. To facilitate transition from ZCAM ODP to ACAM and to reduce start-up costs, its offices are located at Rockwell Fund for at least the first year. ACAM is governed by a five-member executive committee (comprised of funders and ministry executive directors who will be elected by their peers) that works with an executive director and monitors program progress. An external evaluator will develop evaluation criteria for each program and the organization as a whole.

More information about the ZCAM ODP pilot can be found on its successor’s website, the Alliance of Community Assistance Ministries of Greater Houston: www.acamweb.org.

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Zip Code Assistance Ministries Organizational Development Program (continued)

ZCAM ODP Partners List:

Participating Funders

- The Andrews Foundation
- Bridgeway Charitable Foundation
- The Enrico and Sandra di Portanova Charitable Foundation
- The Frees Foundation
- Greater Houston Community Foundation
- The Hamill Foundation
- The Henley Foundation
- Houston Endowment Inc.
- Jewish Federation of Greater Houston
- The Junior League of Houston, Inc.
- McIntosh Foundation
- Powell Foundation
- Rockwell Fund, Inc.
- The Simmons Foundation
- United Way of Greater Houston

Participating Ministries

- East Fort Bend Human Needs Ministry
- Emergency Aid Coalition
- Humble Area Assistance Ministries
- Interfaith Caring Ministries
- Katy Christian Ministries
- Memorial Assistance Ministries
- Northwest Assistance Ministries
- West Houston Assistance Ministries

Participating Program Partners

- BTW Consultants, Inc. (Retreat Facilitation)
- Center for Faith & Health Initiatives (VISTA Program)
- Executive Service Corps of Houston (Thrift Store Institute)
- External Evaluators (Dr. Ritalinda D'Andrea; Jessica Pugil)
- Greater Houston Community Foundation (Fund Managers)
- Leaders Circle Facilitators (Ellen Cokinos Consulting, United Way MAP, Angela Caughlin & GB Center of Solutions)
- Texas Nonprofit Management Assistance Network (Technology Circuit Rider)
- United Way of Greater Houston (Assessments, Consulting)