

RESEARCH ARTICLE



Trust, power, and organizational routines: Exploring government's intentional tactics to renew relationships with nonprofits serving historically marginalized communities

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Abstract

Existing public management practices and organizational routines in the contracting regime have systematically created power asymmetry and distrust between government agencies and nonprofits serving historically marginalized communities. However, little is known about how the government could reform public bureaucracies to renew relationships with these important organizations and build trust. Through a process-oriented inductive study of Minnesota's 2-Generation Policy Network, we find that government's cascading trust-building tactics both inside the bureaucracy and with nonprofits serving Black, Latino, Indigenous, and Immigrant/Refugee communities allowed them to create a new collaborative infrastructure that both changed organizational routines and built power to address racial inequities in the existing human service system. Power is not a zero-sum game. By sharing resources and building trust with their nonprofit partners, government agencies and nonprofits collectively access more power for genuine public management reform to address systematic inequities.

Evidence for Practice

- Trust-building with nonprofits serving historically marginalized communities is slow, hard, yet critical work.
- Intentional actions and tactics inside government bureaucracies are necessary precursors for building trust with nonprofits serving historically marginalized communities.
- Trust helps transform existing organizational routines as a source for change and creates opportunities for new organizational routines and structures to develop.
- When the stock of institutional trust is low or missing, interpersonal trust is key to starting a trust-building loop.
- Power is not a zero-sum game. By sharing resources and building trust with nonprofits serving historically marginalized communities, government agencies and nonprofits collectively have access to more power for genuine public management reform to address systematic inequities.

There is growing recognition that public organizations need to experience significant changes to respond to the “nervous area of government”: racial equity (Gooden, 2014). While government agencies may provide security, stability, and predictability, the trust in them is at an all-time low, particularly from historically marginalized communities (Kettl, 2017; Peng & Lu, 2021). In fact, trust building between government agencies and nonprofits serving historically

marginalized communities may be one of the most daunting public management challenges in the United States given the legacy of historical institutional racism (Feit et al., 2022; Kendi, 2016; Stivers, 2007). However, little research focuses on understanding the incremental ways that trust is built within administrative contexts where the history of racialized institutional distrust is apparent. Yet this reality now faces many public managers grappling with

both the neoliberalism legacies of new public management and the racial reckoning since the fatal shooting of Michael Brown and the rise of the Black Lives Matter movement (later ignited in the summer of 2020 due to the murder of George Floyd and the COVID-19 pandemic).

This study focused on a public management innovation to intervene in these mechanisms. It focused on intervening in three human service policy fields where racial inequity is rampant. In child welfare, the state has the authority to remove children from their parents and terminate parental rights. The over-representation of Black and American Indian children is well documented (Children's Bureau, 2016; Wells, 2011) and racial biases exist at each decision point in the service continuum (Font, 2013; Putnam-Hornstein et al., 2013). In early childhood education, in almost every measure of service and attainment—from diagnosis of developmental and behavioral challenges to kindergarten readiness—there are significant racial disparities (Morgan et al., 2016; Reardon & Portilla, 2016; Zuckerman et al., 2014). The vulnerable cash assistance programs are built upon and perpetuate racial inequity (Floyd et al., 2021). The results are clear—in these and other human services fields, the administrative apparatus is not delivering unbiased outcomes.

In these human services policy fields, contracts with non-governmental services providers are often used for public service provision (Milward & Provan, 2003; Sandfort & Milward, 2008; Smith & Lipsky, 1993). State attention often focuses on negotiating principal-agent relationships one by one with these contracted service organizations without considering the larger systemic consequences of the contracting regime (Smith, 2010). However, the true consequences of “the system” is apparent to nonprofit organizations struggling both with persistent underinvestment and contradictory performance criteria created by local, state, and national governments (Marwell & Calabrese, 2015). In its operational reality, these administrative arrangements are more likely to generate distrust rather than a trusted partnership for public services (Kettl, 2017; Salamon, 1995).

In this study, we take advantage of a unique initiative trying to address these specific challenges and build more durable, trusting relationships between a state government agency and nonprofits serving historically marginalized communities, or more specifically Black, Latino, Indigenous, and Immigrant/Refugee communities¹ in our study context. Minnesota's 2-Generation Policy Network is an attempt to collaboratively redesign systems, policies, and practices to address racial disparities through integrating health and human services. Our in-depth, multi-method study provides a window into how trust is built at the early stages of such a collaborative initiative, particularly one focused on overcoming the legacy of racial inequities that strains the relationship between government and nonprofits serving historically marginalized communities.

Through our inductive analysis, we contribute to the existing literature on trust building and government

nonprofit relations in several important ways. First, we build a conceptual model that recognizes that while trust operates as a resource in public service collaborations, it must be purposively built through cascading administrative tactics, some of which are successful, others which are not. Analytically, we considered the following questions: How did existing legacy public management practices and administrative rules strain the building of trust? What happened when these practices and rules were altered? How did community partners respond initially and over time? In answering these questions, this research uncovers that for nonprofits serving historically marginalized communities, trust building begins with interpersonal relationships. While there may be a belief in building institutional trust, this often requires aligning formal operational practices within the bureaucracy which take longer to change.

Second, by a careful examination of the tactics and strategies undertaken by the state government to build trust and what resulted from the perspective of nonprofit grantees, we seek to enhance the scholarly understanding of how trust is built at the institutional level. Our findings indicate that trust building must commence at the beginning of a formal initiative. It also highlights both the fragility of trust and the reality that it cannot be only built through instrumental activities. These findings contribute to a better understanding of how public managers and street-level bureaucrats develop contextualized solutions to deal with the limitations and vulnerability of the existing bureaucratic system (Masood & Nisar, 2022).

Finally, this case examines an initiative focused, from its inception, on advancing racial equity and addressing long-standing disparities in public service outcomes. As we will discuss below, the leaders recognized the racialized nature of the bureaucracy and intentionally sought to introduce alternative practices to enable a more holistic assessment of and initial partnership with nongovernmental organizations serving minority communities. The analysis adds to emerging scholarly discussions about how social mechanisms influence program implementation within racialized organizations. Pragmatically, it suggests that public administrators must consider many details about the operation of their agencies and be willing to alter existing structures, routines, and practices if they want to make progress on rebuilding the trust and legitimacy of state action with nonprofits serving historically marginalized communities.

WAYS EXISTING PUBLIC MANAGEMENT PRACTICES AND ORGANIZATIONAL ROUTINES CREATE AND MAINTAIN POWER ASYMMETRY AND DISTRUST

Trust and power have been regarded as two key mechanisms of coordinating interorganizational relations in collaborative governance processes (Ansell & Gash, 2008;

Bachmann, 2001; Hardy et al., 1998; Ran & Qi, 2019). Power, as a coordination mechanism, emphasizes exerting control from the more powerful actor over the less powerful and reducing uncertainty. Trust, on the other hand, emphasizes goodwill, risk-taking, and encapsulated interest of both parties (Hardin, 2002).

While power and trust can and often do operate simultaneously in collaborative relationships, scholars also suggest that trust is unlikely to be used and formulated in situations involving extreme disparities of power (Lee & Dodge, 2019). More powerful actors cannot make credible commitments and the less powerful actors have no way to protect themselves from the control of more powerful actors (Farrell, 2004; Ran & Qi, 2019). Thus, even though scholars have emphasized the importance of trust in holding collaboration together and creating meaningful change when the problem is complex (Alexander & Nank, 2009; Bryson et al., 2015; Van Slyke, 2007), trust is, in fact, often absent at the beginning stage of collaboration. What we are more likely to observe in collaboration is uncertainty among partners, conflicts, and the misuse of power (Purdy, 2012). There are big gaps in the scholarly understanding of how collaborative partners can build and maintain trust over time, and how trust interacts with power and existing organizational routines and structures (Emerson & Nabatchi, 2015; Huxham & Vangen, 2005).

The relationship between government agencies and nonprofits serving historically marginalized communities presents a compelling case of how trust may give way to power in collaboration relationships. Since the advent of New Public Management, service contracting has dominated how local and state governments interact with nonprofit organizations, especially in human services (Fabricant & Fisher, 2002; Gazley & Brudney, 2007; Salamon, 1995; Sandfort, 1999; Smith, 2010). Despite the premise that, as a third sector, nonprofits complement public sector insufficiencies (Kramer, 2000), scholars have questioned the effectiveness of the contracting regime in building a genuine relationship between the government and nonprofits. In particular, the existing contracting regime may continue to systematically marginalize certain communities. For one, there is a lack of competition in many service contracting practices both in the U.S. and around the world (Jing & Chen, 2012; Van Slyke, 2003). The lack of competition and requirements of administrative infrastructures often marginalize agencies with expertise serving particular communities in contrast to large, “mainstream” service providers serving predominantly white people. In the modern welfare state, governments often use universalistic criteria in selecting clients and making funding decisions (Gazley & Brudney, 2007; Smith & Lipsky, 1993). As a result, nonprofits serving racial minority communities may not be eligible to apply for many government contracts and grant funding opportunities. This lack of government funding creates a vicious cycle of resource insufficiency that further compromises the administrative capacities of these organizations to go

after other public funding opportunities. According to a recent 2019 report, there is a \$20 m funding gap between white-led and black-led early-stage organizations (Dorsey et al., 2020).

Additionally, the “whiteness” of nonprofit sector values embedded in the contracting out and grantmaking processes systematically marginalize nonprofits serving racial minority communities (Heckler, 2019; LeRoux & Medina, 2022; Nickels & Leach, 2021; Ray, 2019). According to a recent survey conducted in New Zealand, nonprofit organizations serving indigenous communities had a shorter length of contracts, endured a higher intensity of monitoring, and bore more compliance costs, compared to more generic, white service providers (Came et al., 2018). In the U.S. context, Garrow (2014) found that nonprofits located in poor neighborhoods with a higher percentage of African Americans are less likely to receive government funding, suggesting the further marginalization of these nonprofits serving racial minority communities in the contracting regime. Danley and Blessett (2022) found that those White-led high-capacity nonprofits often have the privilege to access government and foundation funding “without having community ties or expertise in local affairs to make their engagement and delivery of service impactful in the long term” (p. 523).

Delays in government payment and insufficient funding to cover the full costs of nonprofit service delivery are also prevalent throughout the contract-based system (Marwell & Calabrese, 2015; Peng & Lu, 2021). Due to their lack of resources and limited networks, these nonprofits are likely to be disproportionately impacted by these malfunctions in the contracting processes compared to organizations serving white communities. The payment delays and insufficiencies further cause stress and a lower level of perceived trust in the government (Peng & Lu, 2021). As a result, these experiences create conditions in which distrust is likely to dominate the relationship with government for many nonprofits serving historically marginalized communities.

Organizational theorists increasingly are helping scholars to see how organizations, including those that carry out public work, are racialized structures (Blume, 2023; Ray, 2019; Ray et al., 2022; Watkins-Hayes, 2009). As such, they either help to maintain current systems that perpetuate racial inequities or work intentionally to undo them. Efforts to carry out such analyses are drawing upon frameworks that emphasize how the dynamic interactions between beliefs (often called schemas) and resources create social structures (Fligstein & McAdam, 2011; Giddens, 1984; Sewell Jr, 1992). These theories acknowledge that structural changes are possible through both external pressures and the agency of leaders—conscious attempts to alter the distribution of resources inside organizations.

The theory suggests, then, that intentions to redesign relationships with nonprofits serving historically marginalized communities in response to more external pressures or genuine leadership values, public managers need to

also change the material and social resources that drive operations inside the bureaucracy. Just as some scholars argue that administrative burden is a type of practice that normalizes racial inequity in public service provision (Ray et al., 2022), other operational decisions may do so as well. For example, how might existing management practices and administrative rules, such as requests for proposals and review processes around contracting, disadvantage organizations serving racial minority communities? How might the composition of work teams move from merely having more racially diverse people to actually shifting practices to be inclusive? Although overtly racist practices are less common in U.S. organizations because of federal and state legal prohibitions, these types of questions are important for analysis to better understand how the mechanisms of social inequity continue to operate within organizations (Bonilla-Silva, 2013).

For our purposes here, our analysis of field data revealed that public managers trying to respond to these questions need to invest in trust building, in this case between the government and nonprofit organizations. Theories suggest that trust is built over time. For example, Vangen and Huxham (2003, p. 8) propose a trust-building loop where trust is built incrementally, over time, in a “virtuous circle.” In other words, trust-building activities feed off each other and accumulate over time, depending on past experiences (Ansell & Gash, 2008; Lambright et al., 2010; Mayer et al., 1995; Sandfort, 1999). In this conception, trust is both an input and an output of collaboration. In developing the practice theory of collaboration, Huxham (2003, p. 408) notes that “while the existence of trusting relationships between partners probably would be an ideal situation, the common practice appears to be that suspicion, rather than trust, between partners, is commonly the starting point.”

Noticeably, the existing literature remains relatively silent about how government agencies can rebuild trust, particularly when distrust emerges out of historic inequities, institutional biases, or existing public management practices. In this research, we take advantage of a unique opportunity to document trust-building tactics undertaken by a public agency that explicitly intended to redesign relationships with nonprofits serving historically marginalized communities.

RESEARCH SETTING AND POLICY FIELD

Research contexts influence the activities undertaken by public managers and their intentions. While Minnesota is a U.S. state often regarded as having high quality of life indicators—high education levels, homeownership rates, and labor market participation—it is also a state where there are persistent and sizable racial disparities in almost all indicators of individual and community well-being (Tran & Treuhaft, 2014). To address what was termed this “Minnesota Paradox,” many intentional actions were

taken in the last decade that begin to address the legacy of white supremacy within institutions. In the mid-2010 s, state leaders undertook a purposive effort to hire more racially diverse leaders into state government. In the Children & Families administration of the Department of Human Services (DHS), this resulted in more racially diverse program managers, promotions of them into positions of authority, and a greater value placed upon knowledge gleaned from working in nonprofit organizations.

This change in leadership provided the chance to pursue new initiatives. In 2016, when the National Governor’s Association called for partners in building 2-Generation Policy networks, these new leaders were excited. This initiative was a response to the growing evidence that human service programs designed around the relationships between parents and children can improve long-term outcomes (Chase-Lansdale & Brooks-Gunn, 2014; Sommer et al., 2016) and that existing structures, public policies, and funding impede public investment in such efforts (Agranoff, 2014; Hasse & Austin, 1997). When selected to participate in the national project with four other states, the Director of Economic Assistance Division decided to use flexible public funds to invest in local service organizations interested in piloting “2-Gen” programs (Kutcher & Sandfort, 2018). It was the only state in the national initiative to invest in local program innovation (Gaines et al., 2019).

This experience, as well as other initiatives attempting to understand the legacy of state action in minority communities disproportionately affected by inadequate child-care and children’s removal from their parents, convinced state leaders that reform needed to focus on changing the nature of government-nonprofit relationships. In early 2018, three DHS Directors began planning for a larger collaborative initiative (Emerson & Nabatchi, 2015). Their first action step was to commit to blending three distinct sources of public funding: federal funds from the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) targeted for innovation and quality enhancement; and state funds earmarked for efforts to reduce racial disparities in child welfare programs. In the end, seven nonprofits serving historically marginalized communities and one governmental agency received five-year grants as part of the overall \$22.5 million initiative. Six nonprofit organizations were awarded the grant as of the first two whole network meetings (See Appendix). These nonprofits are all led by racial minority executive directors from racially and they particularly serve Black, Latino, Indigenous, and Immigrant/Refugee communities in Minnesota.

Early in the operation of the initiative, there were several collaborative governance and racial equity principles articulated, such as the engagement of diverse stakeholders and the use of cross-sector problem-solving teams. Also, the state was explicit about its interests in decentering traditional administrative power, through creating a “learning network” of diverse voices, stressing the value of

information directly from families, and highlighting that cultural knowledge needed to inform the project. The theory of change document demonstrated these principles—through this five-year public investment, the state wanted honest review and dialogue about system-level barriers in policy and practices that intervened in effective engagement of Black, Latino, Indigenous, and Immigrant/Refugee/Refugee communities.

As is documented in the analysis that follows, these collaborative governance aspirations required the painstaking development of a new public management infrastructure, one characterized by trust and transparency to support innovative program design to better meet the needs of Black, Latino, Indigenous, and Immigrant/Refugee/Refugee communities. Existing state bureaucratic practices for communication, contracting, program enhancement, and monitoring more often fueled distrust than the resources needed for collaboration. This was felt both within state government, as the initiative required collaboration across programmatic departments, and in the relationship with the local nonprofit and governments designing the program.

DATA AND METHODOLOGY

This analysis draws upon a rich data set comprised of information from several sources gathered by the University-based term. First, in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with both the local grantees in the initiative and public managers. Grantee interviews occurred remotely and were audio-recorded and transcribed. Interviews with public managers in the state's human services agency included senior appointed officials, program directors, and key staff were conducted in person, audio-recorded, and transcribed verbatim. In total, 18 interviews were conducted between October 2019 and March 2020 with leaders from both the government and nonprofit organizations. Government leaders (seven interviewees) were both those with positional authority in the overall organization and over the specific public programs involved in the funding of the collaboration. Two interviewees were staff involved in providing facilitation support. Nine interviewees were program managers or executive directors who represented the six nonprofit grantees (multiple interviewees for two nonprofits). Interviewers from the University were understood by the informants as being invested in the project, as the team was contracted to provide developmental evaluation and facilitation of the emerging initiative.

Second, our data set included 50 artifacts including the formal statement of the theory of change, tools used to recruit potential grantees, and resources used to structure the grantee selection process. The knowledge of the research team about the overall initiative—and the artifacts that held substantive meaning—enabled us to focus on those which actually operationalize agency practices such as

requests for proposals, contracting, and monitoring tools. Third, members of the University team took participant observation notes about key activities, including internal meetings with state program directors and staff, planning for the request for proposals, and site visits to select grantees. Notes from initial meetings of state working groups, network learning sessions, and staffing meetings were also included to provide insight into administrative challenges and resolutions; the notes represent over 350 hours spent by the team on these activities in 2019 and early 2020.

Finally, a survey was fielded to all of the local sites that submitted a proposal to the state in response to the call for proposals. Survey respondents were program managers or executive directors of the applicant organizations. There was only one respondent for each organization. Out of 64 applicant organizations, 37 organizations responded to the survey, representing a 58% response rate. The survey included all applicants (those who received and those who did not receive five-year funding) to enable us to assess whether or not the state disproportionately selected community partners who had positive past interactions with them. Including both survey and interview data from community organizations helps us triangulate and explore such patterns.

Our analytical approach began as merely descriptive, trying to first understand the various perspectives in this complex, field-based initiative focused upon advancing more racial equity in systems reform. As we looked across these various forms of data, however, we began a more focused, inductive analysis to better understand how aspirations and actions were aligned which yielded our focus in this paper on the importance of trust as a mechanism in government and nonprofit relationships. We introduced all data into Nvivo and embarked upon numerous waves of coding, with each investigator reading data and documenting in analytical memos emerging understanding of themes and construct relationships. These memos formed the basis of the findings and interpretation that follows, with certain vignettes highlighted to better communicate our conclusions from this detailed analytical work.

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Gathering around six tables clustered in the light-filled room, about 45 people from Minnesota's Department of Human Services came together for the day-long planning session for the new 2-Generation Policy Network initiative. Some were apprehensive—although most worked for the state, they did not know each other and there was always the constant press of email to attend to. Others were cautiously optimistic—the invitation for the day had mentioned leaders' intentions to work more authentically with agencies serving Black, Latino, Indigenous, and Immigrant/Refugee/Refugee communities over the next

5 years. Buzzing with anticipatory energy as people got coffee and gathered background documents, the room quieted as three Directors stepped to the front of the room.

Janae,² an African American woman, leading one of the largest Divisions in the Department with 120 employees, began by stressing the importance of the work bringing them together. While the Department focuses its attention on implementing programs that treat parents and children as mere eligibility groups, the real dynamics within families are ignored. The consequences were particularly bleak for Black, Latino, Indigenous, and Immigrant/Refugee/Refugee communities. From her experiences, she knew that nonprofits serving these communities could address the needs of whole families if it were not for state and county policy mandates pulling them away. So the state needed to change. Janae asked: “How can we each connect to that local knowledge? How do we engage families more effectively in ways they want to be engaged? How do we put equity into action and tear down institutionalized racism?” Answering these questions, she acknowledged would require a different way of engaging, communicating, and leading than what was typically demonstrated by the state agency. But as she spoke, those gathered seemed to come alive with the possibilities.

The invitation to change personal practices was echoed by Jerry, a white, gay man, who directed the child welfare programs. He shared his own professional experiences working at the frontline lines providing comprehensive preventative services and his frustration with how little that reality shaped state administrative practices. Along with the two women beside him, he felt proud to attempt real system systems with this initiative. Acknowledging that mistakes would be made, he concluded, “a learning culture is imperative” to fuel changes in administrative approaches. The framing of the initiative and day’s work continued with Choua, the Director of Child Care services, a Hmong woman who shared her own story. Her parents had come to this country as refugees and her formal education had started in the antipoverty, federal Head Start program. After finishing college, she worked in early education programs and applied for this state leadership role to bring her lived experiences to public administration. And now, in this initiative, she explained that all three Directors were inviting them to consider a powerful question: “How do I use this power that I now hold to effect change?” In her mind, sharing power with BIPOC nonprofits was critical. If they did so authentically and transparently, this collaboration would impact the state for years to come.

Attendees later reflected that they had never before heard three senior public managers speak with such a unified vision about a collaborative effort. The day unfolded with individuals naming potential tactics—engaging and reporting to the legislature, communicating with agencies that had hosted site visits, executing contracts, reducing racial disparities—and small groups developing plans to

carry them out. Participating in the meeting helped create more optimism about the road ahead and enabled them to begin to see how the Directors’ vision could be brought into practice.

How did existing legacy public management practices and administrative rules strain the building of trust?

In this empirical case, the idea for the collaboration emerged from these public managers who, as suggested by this story from the planning retreat, realized they needed to alter state administrative practices to invest in whole family programs implemented by nonprofits serving historically under-represented groups. The initiative sought to both blend public funding and design service programs that engaged whole families, rather than merely administering programs consistent with the policy categories of “kindergarten ready,” “at risk for abuse,” or “work ready” that appeared in the policy.

Before attempting this daunting technical feat, the three Directors had to build their relationships. They had worked together for 3 years and had the clear support of their direct supervisor, Niaya the Assistant Commissioner of Children & Families. Reflecting upon the launch of the effort, she noted that initially, her overall questions about the project were technical, consistent with the norms of the agency: Can we meet all of the statutory requirements? Can we adjust contracting processes without going to the legislature? Yet as Niaya thought more about it, she realized that it provided an important learning opportunity for the agency. In her mind, it was “like lighting a fire, and watching where it was going to catch elsewhere.” She used her positional authority to become an ambassador for the work, including briefing the Governor and Lieutenant Governor about the 2-Generation Policy Network.

With this support, the Directors initiated planning activities which included drafting a request for proposals from nonprofits, developing grant review processes, and building internal cross-division workgroups to engage with each local site. They also agreed that quarterly meetings with the whole network once the grantees were selected would allow insights to be shared and reveal important learning about system barriers. These tactics pushed against the conventional practices within the state agency where potential legislative oversight cements a risk-averse administrative climate that reinforces program-based structures. In describing the beginning of the initiative, Jerry noted that it was the only time in his 7 years in the agency that he had attempted such a cross-division collaboration because there was no real infrastructure: “We didn’t even have the structures or the forums for us to talk to each other and get to know each other.” But the potential value of work to unearth the knowledge of nonprofits serving communities of color to

alter state-level administration and policy seemed clear to him. Yet, each Director needed to take risks. As Jerry continued:

We have not asked people for permission to put this funding together. We did it. And there are bodies that I still need to report to that are probably not going to be happy about it. But we did it because we felt we had sound justification.... We did it because we need to try some different things. It wasn't anything about this agency that brought us together. It was us.

This commitment to each other was created over time. When one had sponsored a series of listening sessions, the others had shown up. The conversations they had in the hallways about their commitments to racial equity and their frustrations with the existing system built their interpersonal trust. These interpersonal relationships forged around their identities and shared commitments to working differently within state government were important to moving forward with the changes in administrative practices.

For example, the conventional state processes within the Department for issuing contracts are incredibly complex and time intensive. Strict practices exist for developing and issuing requests for proposals and making funding decisions involving multiple levels of internal reviews that often took months to achieve. In this case, this process was made more difficult because the funds drew upon three different public sources, each with their specific articulation of the target group and other rules. Staff held over 20 internal meetings with other administrators to get an agreement that the proposal should describe communities' needs and capability to respond, rather than the conventional description of an intervention design and expected outputs. In the end, they were able to persevere and the language in the formal announcement was consistent with their vision—a “five-year collaborative learning relationship with the state of Minnesota” to a “co-creative process that will uncover and address the systemic influences of racial, geographic and economic inequalities.”

Yet, when staff tried to reduce the amount of documentation required from applicants, they were met with resistance; even minor adjustments necessitated detailed internal negotiations with contracting staff. While webinars were conventionally used to announce grant opportunities, in this case, staff tried to express requirements in terms familiar to nonprofits serving historically under-represented groups rather than policy constructs. In addition, they went above and beyond conventional practices by doing outreach to potential grantees through email and social media, trying to reach agencies that had never before received a state grant; in interviews, staff noted they hoped this professionalism communicated a transparent and trustworthy

process, and signaled the intentions of the state to be better partners than they had in the past with these organizations.

In addition to the conventional committee review of written proposals, staff also planned site visits to applicants receiving the highest scores. The site visit tactic was seen by the Directors as both a means to provide important information to aid decision-making and a way to begin to establish relationships with the community agencies. Yet site visits were not a practice that had much precedent in the Department. New assessment tools needed to be developed. Site visits needed to be scheduled and coordinated. The multi-division staff team needed to figure out how to integrate the information gathered during the visits with the committee's ratings and Directors needed to negotiate their responsibility and authority for the final decision about the grant awards. Further internal negotiations needed to occur over both the contract terms and process so that the initiative adhered to state and federal law *and* communicated the spirit of colearning. While staff planned a three-month process from request for proposals to awarding of grants, developing these new administrative processes took far longer. Sites were notified of their selection after 6 months, but contracts were not finalized until another 3 months. When Department staff and Directors reflected upon it later, it seemed like there were few options; these barriers to collaboration needed to be confronted and new practices established.

What happened when these practices and rules were altered?

These public management reforms were painful to achieve. Although Directors were committed to this effort, there was always a pull to the programmatic responsibilities within their Divisions—for example, implementing a new child welfare federal law, developing new technology tools to improve reporting among child care providers, and proposing new policies to enable faster access to food and child care assistance during the COVID pandemic. That type of work, seen as “central” to each division, created a scarcity of time for senior managers to dedicate to the ongoing learning and strategy development at the heart of their vision. This reality sometimes strained the collaborative activities among the three Directors. As Juliette, the project manager for this phase reflected, “First there is their relationship and from their trust a general feeling of good momentum. [But when there are hang-ups], we have to revisit why that decision was made. And make sure that everyone can see where it is going before they agree to keep participating.”

While the Directors could lean into their relationships to propel them through times when shared understanding broke down, the staff did not have prior working relationships. And many were not familiar with this way of working. Juliette continued: “We talk about collaboration,

but I don't think it is always understood. Some people [who work for DHS] want to know exactly what's expected of them at any given time. And collaboration requires adaptability and big-picture thinking. And that's not necessarily the strong suite of state government." While collaboration was the goal, the cross-division initiative required staff to adjust their typical roles and practices in light of this larger "big picture" goal. Most of the tasks of this collaborative initiative—the process of application review, providing support for program design in the sites during the first year, and even convening the network of grantees—pushed staff to act outside of their traditional roles of writing rules and monitoring contracts. Individually, they needed to overcome their hesitations to act without a clear direction to build authentic relationships with these new community partners; while some embraced this new freedom, it caused great anxiety in others.

Yet the Directors' collaborative vision also caused them to implement other new tactics to try to build a different relationship with organizations serving Black, Latino, Indigenous, and Immigrant/Refugee/Refugee communities. For example, they assigned state staff who shared the same racial identity to work with site teams over the full five-year period. In this way, they wanted to personalize the public bureaucracy and assure local agencies that relationship building was not abstract but very specific. They also invested in facilitation and evaluation support from the University to assure that collaborative practices would form the cornerstone of the network. State program managers apprenticed with facilitators and designers, learning about new tools and building new skills. They heard stories about historical trauma they had never before—the shame American Indian mothers feel when they do not know about their traditional culture, the compliance pressure community organizations felt to adhere to state-mandated reporting requirements, the frustration these nonprofits feel when they do not know how to affect the levers of "the system" but can only see how its under-resourced work focused upon whole families. University staff coached state managers on how to take these lessons and hone their change strategies within the state agency. They also pushed conventional monitoring standards—that often resulted in meaningless information being reported—to enable mutual learning between the sites and state to replace mere bureaucratic accountability.

Reflecting on the first year of activities, Director Chaoa recognized that this type of collaborative, equity work was "intense." She explained, "We're tackling really hard issues, and are having challenging conversations. How do we do that and make sure that staff don't get burned out? Anytime you do equity work, it's really draining. How do we identify the system change opportunities?" Directors repeatedly communicated to their internal teams the reality that providing equitable treatment to overcome the legacies of the past required the state to lay down its

sole focus on the consistent process to recognize the significance of customized relationships. They needed to not solely worry about short-term accountabilities but rather focus on longer-term outcomes.

While the existing administrative constraints could slow forward momentum, Niaya, the Assistant Commissioner, noted that it was important to stay focused on the long-term goal:

Even if grantees are disappointed that we don't go live [at the original date], we are building a relationship, a trusting relationship where we are being transparent. We say 'here's what we're trying to do, we don't know if it's going to be perfect this time around, but we're doing our best.' We ask them, 'tell us how we can do better. Tell us what you need. That really is the key to trusting relationships, that you're open. It's not that everything goes great. It's that you're honest about what's happening.... That's the kind of **relationship infrastructure** that we need to be successful in certain communities that don't trust the Department of Human Services.

Following the lead of the Governor, public managers regularly acknowledged that Black, Latino, Indigenous, and Immigrant/Refugee/Refugee communities had little reason to trust the existing system. Yet, in the minds of the three Directors and the Assistant Commissioner, this 2-Gen initiative was the government's opportunity to build an alternative "relationship infrastructure" necessary for working with communities that have experienced systemic racism. Niaya concluded, "It's our job to keep showing up at the table and saying, we're here to listen and we'd like to hear from you. If they say, we don't want to talk to you. Okay. But we must continue... We don't get to just turn away." Public managers used their trusting relationships and administrative authority to launch this initiative and begin to create an alternative form of infrastructure to work with marginalized communities.

How did nonprofit grant applicants respond initially?

From the perspective of the nonprofit organizations applying for the funds, most of these internal state activities were invisible. What they could see were timelines and what they experienced were delays that came from the state processes. Some information about the initiative had been shared informally in the 6 months leading up to the official release of the request for proposals, but the release of the request itself was delayed for no clear reason.

In our survey of applicants (37 respondents out of 64 grant applicants), the vast majority noted that their

motivation to apply was to address inequities in their communities and further integrate services with other local partners. These motivations helped them to act quickly because, when the request was finally released, there were only 5 weeks to develop proposals. The directions required applicants to allocate staff, document partnerships with other local community agencies, and develop a detailed budget. Detailed documentation, including letters of commitment and other government forms, also were required. Four out of five respondents noted that pulling together the grant took “a lot of work;” 30% reported they invested more than 40 hours to complete it. These administrative delays and subsequent tighter timelines compromised community partners’ perceived trustworthiness of the agency. More than half (54%) of the respondents agreed that the time delay in the selection process created a burden on their organization’s decision-making. The vast majority (73%) also disagreed with the statement that they received updates about the selection in a timely manner. Most respondents did not agree that DHS “knew what it’s doing” or “has deep knowledge about the problems the community is facing”. Most respondents also did not feel that DHS kept the interest of the grantees in mind when making decisions. Taken together, the survey of grant applicants documents that—although they had put in the work to apply for initiative funding—their perception was a low level of trustworthiness in the Department of Human Services.

Juliette, the project manager for this phase, recognized these dynamics and hoped that their efforts to be transparent and inspirational through the request for proposal process could address these dynamics: She noted:

Reverberations from previous relationships [grantees had with the state] also play out. We were working with sites and saying we want something different. And they do not really believe it. I do not blame them. They’ve had relationships with the state before that are very structured, very constrained, and compliance-driven. While we are saying we want to try and do something different, breaking them out of the habits of interaction with the state is challenging. And sometimes we aren’t always able to carry through on wanting to be flexible and adaptable. And collaboration suffers because of that.

The work of overcoming the Legacy of the past was very much present in the first months of launching this initiative.

Our in-depth interviews with the grantees further elaborated on these initial conditions. Some grantees held a favorable assessment of the state agency and emphasized the genuine efforts shown and interpersonal relationships built during the selection process. When asked about early experiences, a project manager in a nonprofit organization serving refugees and immigrants

since the 1980 s said: “I saw people in the state are coming together and working to help make this place a better place.... They are good people. They want to see Minnesota and its citizens and constituents prosper and I think that was the biggest takeaway.” Even one leader who expressed a high level of distrust toward the agency due to past experiences noted that she appreciated how the state Directors had come together: “I learned ... there are three separate very large governmental agencies that are actively putting their money where their mouth is and coming together as a group to offer opportunities. That was surprising to me.”

Despite the general appreciation of the interpersonal interactions with the Directors and DHS staff, more grantees offered a more conservative assessment of the trustworthiness of the state government. While there might be a personal connection with these particular Directors, they were only individual people. One nonprofit manager in an emergency shelter serving families experiencing homelessness said it succinctly: “Individuals may desire change, but they are part of a larger structure and system and are trying to fight its inertia.” As Juliette had worried, most reflected upon past experiences of working with the state, where the existing bureaucratic structure inhibited effective relationships and service arrangements. They also noted what seemed like inherent disconnects between the DHS leadership and the community; when push came to shove, the state would prioritize its processes over the community’s needs. As one agency leader reflected, “It never occurred to me that (the state should keep our organization’s interest in mind). Is that something that they are supposed to do?”

For nonprofits serving Black, Latino, Indigenous, and Immigrant/Refugee communities, was trust built over time?

Attempting to overcome this legacy and bring the idea of a “learning network” into practice, the initiative included quarterly meetings with all grantee organizations, Directors, and state staff on site and evaluation teams. At the first meeting, the Directors launched the session sharing their own stories and vision, much as they had in the internal staff retreat nearly 4 months earlier. To have real partners in the work, they pledged to “create a new infrastructure” and help the local partners “design structures to meet family needs” that address negative outcomes for Black, Latino, Indigenous, and Immigrant/Refugee families interacting with the system. Noting the support of others, including the Governor and his Children’s Cabinet, they stressed their commitment to mutual learning. They recognized that communities often have solutions and they hoped that “each would work to identify what each of us can do” to carry the lessons into systems change.

Each of the whole network meetings was carried out with very participatory processes focused on giving

people experiences in colearning. At the first meeting, for example, people were asked to do speed dating to describe work, and what they each did to center the lived experience of families into policy and program design/delivery. At the second meeting, they used a peer learning process where people named discussion topics of most burning interest to them: a tactic to develop a “master leasing” strategy to help families access housing; techniques for engaging their local core team of stakeholders or families to help in first year’s work of program design; discussions to probe assumptions about families underlying program designs. The facilitation team was made up of people of diverse races and each important conversation of the whole group was graphically recorded. As the meetings unfolded, beautiful visual art documented shared learning. In one, a wall-size poster had images of some of the leaders and a ribbon running through it on which was written the purpose of the gathering: “laying the foundation, sharing our dreams, building trust, sharing cultural healing, systems change, healing intergenerational trauma.” The colorful poster was a concrete artifact of the diversity in the room. After each meeting, the facilitation team created a short, newsletter with photographs and key documents from the day-long session. These thoughtfully designed participatory processes of codefining the problem and coproducing solutions demonstrated the state government’s commitment to share power with nonprofits serving Black, Latino, Indigenous, and Immigrant/Refugee communities. These nonprofits were no longer merely a tool of the government to implement services defined and scoped by the government.

We interviewed nonprofit grantees after the first two meetings. In general, all the community partners appreciated the interpersonal interactions with the Department Directors, staff, and other grantees. The participatory activities built interpersonal trust and informants shared their growing confidence that the DHS was genuine in carrying out this system-based reform. As a leader of an organization with expertise serving refugees noted: “The flexibility...shows me that the state is invested in this, that they’re really listening, and that they want to try something that hasn’t been tried before.” He goes on to say, “It is evident when you interact with them. And when you go to the next meeting, you will see that as well.... It’s just so blatantly obvious because of the way that they act.” The very structure of the participatory network helped convince these organizations that these Directors and program leaders knew the systemic challenges that hurt Black, Latino, Indigenous, and Immigrant/Refugee families. The leaders from the refugee service organization concluded: “If they didn’t know ... they wouldn’t be doing this kind of work. The fact that they are doing this kind of approach shows me that they understand that there is something that needs to be better.”

These day-long whole network meetings began to create an expectation of colearning with the state that served as a practical, collaborative foundation when the

COVID-19 pandemic hit during the first year. When the large group gathered virtually, they were able to benefit from small group conversations with people in other roles across the state. Nonprofit program managers, state staff, DHS Directors, and frontline case managers shared information about their organizational response to the pandemic and social uprisings as Minnesota responded to the murder of George Floyd. They recognized common challenges—how could they create better processes for providing food, housing, and access to services to those in need? How could they make sense of the racial inequity in how the pandemic was affecting their local community? How could they use flexible funding to respond to some of these needs? The information shared was specific and tactical; people felt comfortable authentically engaging with each other and sharing their emerging understanding. As one staff member who had worked for DHS for more than 30 years reflected, “I have never seen the state work so fast to meet the needs of people.”

Thus, while the first year of activities in the Minnesota 2-Gen Policy Network was unprecedented, there were some glimmers that the tactics undertaken by public managers had begun to create a different type of infrastructure in working with these few nonprofits. The events during the summer of 2020, however, brought into the spotlight the massive amount of work that lies ahead for public managers to redesign administrative practices and processes to assure these nonprofits of the state’s trustworthiness and commitment.

INTERPRETATION

Our data from the early development of the Minnesota 2-Generation Policy Network documents how leaders in the state agency gradually built trust through altering existing public management routines and structures. They began within the public bureaucracy before starting to work with nonprofits serving Black, Latino, Indigenous, and Immigrant/Refugee families. Figure 1 illustrates the tactics described in the findings section, illustrating what happened and what resulted in this case. Given the historical power disparities and legacy of distrust, the narrative reveals how much care needed to be taken to transform the existing contracting regime which, in our interpretation, is a manifestation of and helps cements systematic inequities into the current public management regime. Our analysis reveals that trust operates as a critical resource, a set of schemas that help push against the existing structures that perpetuate systemic inequities.

To stay grounded in the empirical reality of this case, we developed Figure 2 to summarize the tactics public managers carried out as they tried to build trust with nonprofits serving Black, Latino, Indigenous, and Immigrant/Refugee families and what resulted. In both figures, tactics cascaded with one another, each micro-action set needing to occur before the next right action in trust

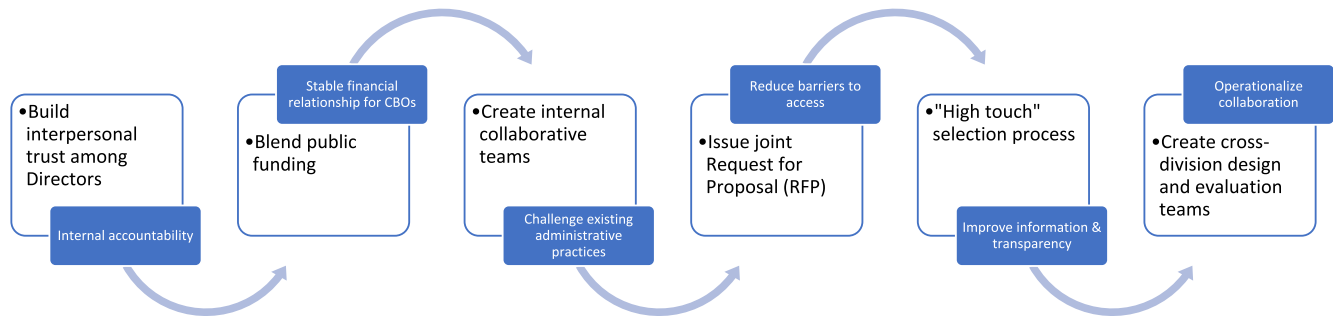


FIGURE 1 Government's cascading trust-building tactics and internal results to create a different public management infrastructure.

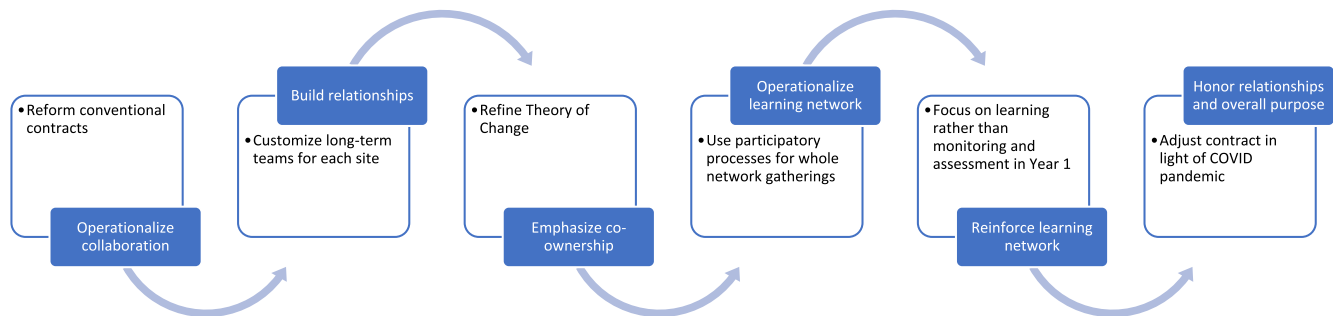


FIGURE 2 Government's cascading trust-building tactics and external results.

building could be undertaken. The overall process could not be predicted or planned. It needed to emerge as leaders and staff observed what happened from their initial actions in the complex, social system (Fligstein & McAdam, 2011; Sandfort & Moulton, 2020).

Our analysis reveals that trust helps transform existing organizational routines as a source for change and creates opportunities for new organizational routines and structures to develop. By sharing resources and building trust with nonprofits serving historically marginalized communities, government agencies and nonprofits collectively have access to more power for genuine public management reform to address systematic inequities. The interactions among trust, power, and organizational routines are key to understanding how government agencies could renew relationships with nonprofits serving historically marginalized communities.

Trust, organizational routines, and bureaucratic change

Consistent with the metaphor of “networking in the shadow of bureaucracy” (McGuire & Agranoff, 2010), our analysis reveals that public management reform toward collaborative governance takes place in the web of existing hierarchies, structures, and routines. Throughout this particular public management reform process, directors, and project leaders repeatedly noted they were pushing against rigid administrative structures, an apparatus that

was larger than any of their span of control. Although Directors were committed to this vision, staff working under them hesitated to deviate from conventional routines. Each step in the process to establish this collaborative governance initiative required persistent, and what often felt like courageous actions, both from those with formal authority and those who worked for them.

Public managers had to make many routine decisions, for example, how to structure a meeting, who to invite, and how to leverage the tools of the public bureaucracy in ways consistent with the trust-building aim. While these decisions often seem mundane or insignificant, each provides an opportunity to build or deplete the overall stock of trust in the initiative. They become tangible ways that nonprofits serving Black, Latino, Indigenous, and Immigrant/Refugee community can observe and experience in daily interactions with the state. They constitute, in the words of one of our informants, a “relationship infrastructure.”

As Agranoff (2014) argued, the authority of hierarchical roles continues to shape service networks and collaborative initiatives. In this case, while Directors used their authority to refocus public funds from state and national sources, they also needed to attend to conditions within the state bureaucracy. Until formal leaders stood in front of their staff and shared their vision, skepticism about the intent of the initiative prevailed. In other words, the Directors' interpersonal relationships and trust building—alignment of core commitment, living experiences, and background—certainly allowed them to coordinate their

administrative authority. This enabled them to secure sponsorship from the Assistant Commissioner and Governor, ultimately enabling them to champion the whole public management reform process (Bryson et al., 2015). But they needed to engage others in their organization to change existing organizational routines and align with the larger articulated intent (Feldman, 2000). In this way, there was new meaning and purpose in what initially appeared to be rigid organizational routines, such as planning meetings, disseminating grant requests, and signing contracts. Reflecting the theoretical framework Feldman and Rafaeli (2002) describe, the new activities enabled public managers and staff to build new connections and shared understandings, thus activating the public management reform from within.

As new organizational routines were created, the trust-building cycle continued to evolve and facilitate more durable public management reform. New techniques for webinars, practices to communicate more openly with applicants and selected grantees, gatherings where state and nonprofits could learn together—these new organizational practices created opportunities to build trust both between the government and nonprofits, and among nonprofits themselves. They also provided new resources and an institutional foundation for accountability. Trust does not replace structures and routines. Instead, these two forces strengthen and reinforce each other (Braithwaite, 1998; Sandfort & Moulton, 2020). These institutional innovations, combined with the interpersonal trust built in these processes, created a sufficient level of institutional trust toward the government for nonprofits that enabled them to participate in this public management reform. In turn, nonprofits' participation in this reform further enabled the trust-building loop to operate.

The operation of trust and power in the public management reform process

In most public human service bureaucracies, each division has an independent relationship with nonprofit organizations based on the form and content of the contracts they issue. This administrative arrangement makes it difficult to initiate and implement system-oriented changes. As the theory of change documents developed at the start of this project noted, “The current system is transactional rather than adaptive, transformative, and innovative.” In this initiative, led predominantly by racially diverse public managers, their collaborative vision was particularly audacious because they wanted to develop authentic collaboration. To deliver this vision, they needed to intentionally build trust among themselves and with nonprofits serving Black, Latino, Indigenous, and Immigrant/Refugee communities. They also need to build power that was initially fragmented within public bureaucracies and across the communities. Figure 3 illustrates how trust-building occurred in this case, among the

DHS Directors and between the government and nonprofits so that power was gradually built. This process enabled them to begin to collectively address racial inequities in human services. In our inductive data analysis, we particularly noticed three stages of trust-building: among the Directors, between the government and grant applicants, and between the government and nonprofit grantees serving Black, Latino, Indigenous, and Immigrant/Refugee communities. Each built power and resources for the subsequent actions to take place.

Trust building and power sharing occurred at and across different levels of collaboration in this case of public management reform. The three Directors developed the collaboration within the bureaucracy to build more power, necessary to destabilize some of the existing agency routines around requesting proposals and site visits. As leaders in these nonprofits and public managers build more trust, they collectively built and shared both more power and resources for the collaboration to address the systematic racial disparities (Feldman, 2004; Feldman & Quick, 2009). This was crucial to giving them a chance at the work ahead—making concrete changes in public policy and public investments to support programming focused on whole families.

It is important to note that trust and power are not mutually exclusive in different stages of the collaboration. With the operation of trust, power sharing becomes a non-zero-sum game. By sharing resources and building trust with nonprofits serving historically marginalized communities, government agencies and nonprofits collectively have access to more power for genuine public management reform to address systematic inequities. This finding is consistent with Ran and Qi (2019)'s proposition that power and trust in collaborative governance often have shared sources. For example, the consolidation of the three funding streams and the support from the Governor and his Children's Cabinet built power for the three divisions in the DHS. In the meantime, this power (based on resources and authority) makes the DHS more trustworthy to nonprofits serving historically marginalized communities as they believe the agency has the ability/power to deliver the promise. For nonprofits serving Black, Latino, Indigenous, and Immigrant/Refugee communities, their power comes from the discursive legitimacy in serving and representing these communities. By building trust and working with these nonprofits, the government also gains power in discursive legitimacy to drive system change and overcome existing structural barriers. For each stage, sharing power, building trust, and building power happen simultaneously and they mutually reinforce the development of other mechanisms.

Yet within this overall process, both public and nonprofit leaders also recognized they would hit some barriers that would not easily be changed. While trust was a resource for making change, it did not guarantee all state structures could be changed. Status reports are still needed to comply with the requirements of the contracts. Timelines of accountability were inflexible. While the

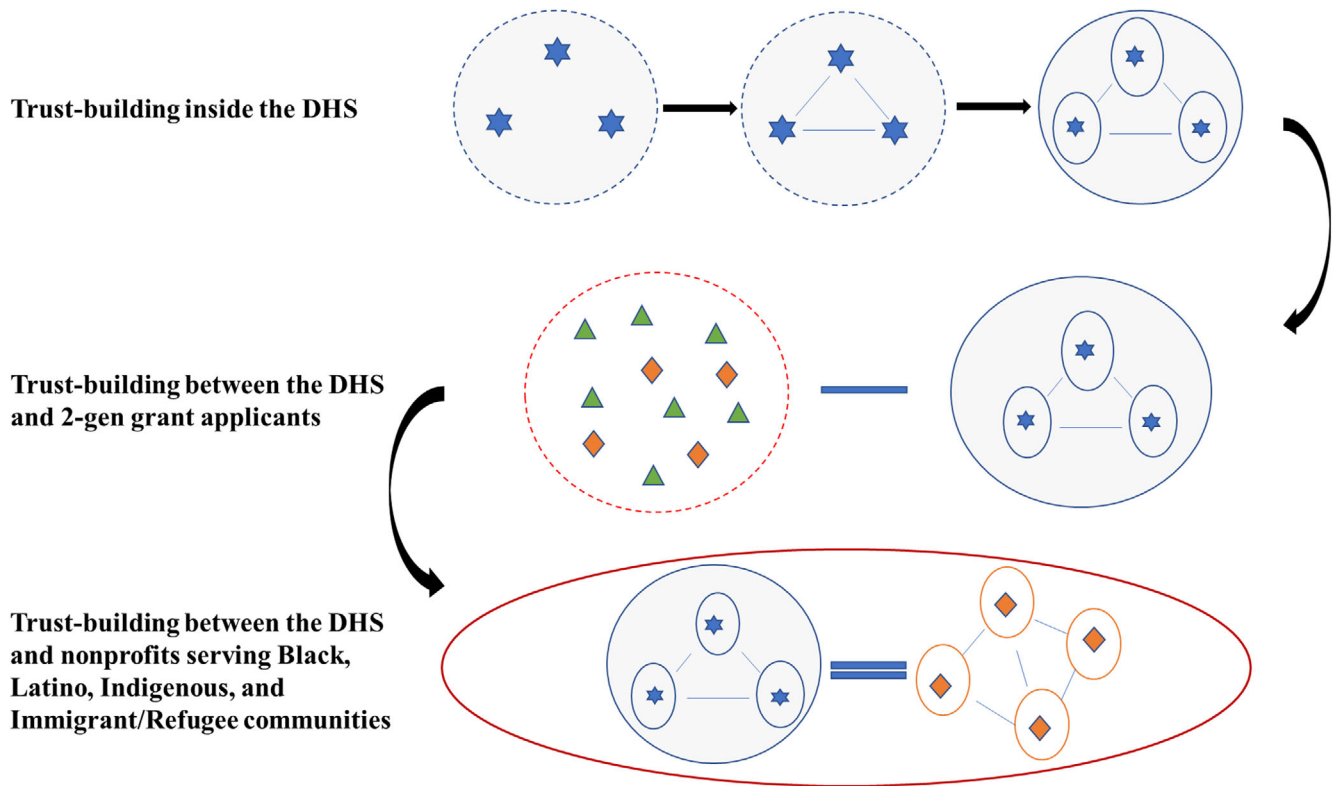


FIGURE 3 The interplay of trust and power in the early stage of the public management reform. Dashed lines indicate that power is fragmented and there is an absence of trust among actors. Solid lines indicate that trust has been or is being built among actors. ★ refers to the three DHS Directors. ▲ refers to 2-gen grant applicants. ◆ refers to nonprofit grantees serving Black, Latino, Indigenous, and Immigrant/Refugee communities. The circles around those actors refer to their divisions (in the case of the Directors) and their local networks (in the case of BIPOC nonprofits).

painstakingly-built trusting relationships created more confidence in the legitimacy of state action in the eyes of the nonprofit partners, the private agencies knew that some battles with the state would not be won. Although the existing administrative practices sustain racial inequity, they are not easily abandoned (Bonilla-Silva, 2013).

CONCLUSION

With the social inequities made more salient in the stressors of the COVID-19 era, it should become a top priority for public managers to carry out genuine public management reforms to better serve historically marginalized communities. This study improves our understanding of how trust can be built between government and nonprofits serving historically marginalized communities when distrust from years of normative routines dominates these relationships. It also advances the conceptual and practical understanding of how human agency across different levels of management creates change in the bureaucracy and public service provision system (Pandey et al., 2022). Our analysis highlights that, at the beginning of the public management reform, complex interdependences among personal identities, organizational routines, interpersonal trust, institutional trust, and power exist. Trust must be built at and across different levels of collaboration.

Like all research, there are important contextual factors that should shape the interpretation of these results. First, while we indicate the importance of long-term trust building between the government and nonprofits serving historically marginalized communities, our study was only able to track less than 2 years of the initiative. Data collection was unfortunately interrupted due to the COVID-19 pandemic. While we indeed documented the pre and beginning stages of the collaboration, a longer time horizon would depict a more complete picture. Second, the State of Minnesota and this initiative led by the Department of Human Services are indeed a special case. The murder of George Floyd has put Minnesota at the center stage for racial justice and there was strong momentum inside the state for these public management reforms. In addition, several managers from historically marginalized backgrounds were able to reside in key leadership positions for the DHS. Other states may not have such resources and momentum for similar public management reforms, making these reforms even more challenging.

Yet this study showcases a hopeful pathway toward renewing relationships with nonprofits serving historically marginalized communities and addressing systematic inequities. To begin to address these difficult problems, public managers need to be intentional about the racialized legacy of their organizations (Ray, 2019). They need to treat nonprofit community-based organizations, especially those

servicing historically marginalized communities, beyond the tools or proxy of state actions and systematically involve them in the key decisions of how public services are planned, designed and distributed (Cheng, 2019; Cheng et al., 2022; Feit et al., 2022). They also must acknowledge the significance of their own identities in assessing and challenging traditional forms of bureaucratic authority. That awareness must be followed with careful consideration of strategies and tactics that build collaborative activities and challenge existing routines within and between organizations. This slow, hard work is what is needed to build and reinforce trust. It is the old adage of “walking the talk.” When trust exists, it becomes a resource to help change structural conditions. In this case, purposive actions communicated to historically marginalized communities that the state was entering into a process of change which, in turn, helped convince leaders from these communities that trust in the government is warranted. Trust is not automatically generated. It needs to be earned.

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ENDNOTES

¹ While Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) is a more popular word to describe racial minority communities, scholars have raised concerns about this acronym and asked for more specific labels when describing these communities (e.g., Deo, 2021; Lee, 2003). We, therefore, chose to use Black, Latino, Indigenous, and Immigrant/Refugee communities to accurately describe the service population of nonprofits in our sample.

² All participant names appeared in the manuscript are pseudonyms.

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APPENDIX: NONPROFITS PARTICIPATING IN MINNESOTA'S 2-GENERATION POLICY NETWORK SECOND COHORT, AS OF THE FIRST TWO WHOLE NETWORK MEETINGS

	CLUES: Comunidades Latinas Unidas en Servicio	Fond du Lac tribal and community college	Intercultural mutual assistance association	Minneapolis American Indian center	Northpoint health and wellness center, Inc.	People serving people
Focus Population	Latino families with low incomes and with children ages 0–3.	Children from prenatal to 3 years whose parents speak Ojibwe.	Immigrant and Refugee families with children Kindergarten-aged or younger children.	American Indian new mothers living in the Twin Cities who have a history of substance, and child protection services.	African American children from conception to age 3 and their parents/ caregivers living in North Minneapolis, Brooklyn Center, and Brooklyn Park.	Families experiencing homelessness especially those who are pregnant or have young children. Family homelessness overwhelmingly impacts African American and American Indian communities.
Key program elements	CLUES will address the disparities, particularly during ages birth to 5, faced by children in Latino families regarding school readiness as a result of systemic failures, and engage the whole family in services to enhance their well-being.	The college's language immersion program is partnering with Tribal Social Services to plan and implement "Grandma's House," a language nest where infants and toddlers, with the help of their parents and elders grow up immersed in the Ojibwe language and culture.	Partnering with families and other community agencies to explore the social-cultural barriers of success in pre-kindergarten- to kindergarten-age children, whose families are first-generation immigrants and refugees.	Work with mothers to develop a stable, nurturing environment for their children, incorporating cultural teachings and resources.	To support healthy child development during the critical period from conception to age 3, Northpoint, along with partners and families, will research the systemic failures that result in an abundance of risk factors and a lack of protective factors for many African American children and their parents/ caregivers.	Explore issues related to access to childcare and quality early childhood education and prevention of the recurrence of family homelessness.

Source: Adapted from Sandfort et al. (2020).