

Mission and Beliefs

The Mary Reynolds Babcock Foundation assists people in the Southeast to build just and caring communities that nurture people, spur enterprise, bridge differences and foster fairness. Our mission is to help people and places to move out of poverty and achieve greater social and economic justice. We support organizations and networks that work across race, ethnic, economic and political differences to make possible a brighter future for all.

We believe in the responsibility and power of individuals — including youth and young adults — to improve their own lives and to act collectively to increase opportunity for themselves and their communities. All human beings have the potential to be productive citizens, yet individual responsibility is not enough. Social and economic transformation in low-wealth communities requires changes in historic disinvestment patterns and removal of structural barriers.

We value democracy and inclusiveness. We believe in working with people in low-wealth communities to shape their own destiny. We believe that working across differences is essential for sustaining our democracy and for expanding economic opportunity.

We hold the following beliefs about how people and places move out of poverty.

- People have better chances at escaping poverty when they believe in themselves, make good choices, and have access to fundamental opportunities, which include excellent education, social networks that connect them to work and to the larger society, living-wage jobs, and fair financial institutions.
- Ownership of assets such as homes, businesses and savings is essential for moving and staying out of poverty.
- These basic societal advantages require a solid infrastructure and consistent investment in order to secure these advantages in low-wealth communities. Changes in systems and policies — local, state and/or national — are almost always necessary. Long-term public and private investment is also essential.
- Connections are vital. Grassroots, community-led organizations must be connected with key institutions in their states, the Southeast or across the nation in order to achieve large-scale, lasting changes. On a bigger level, local economies must be connected to regional economies.
- Young people can take on leadership roles that improve their own lives, make contributions to their communities, and prepare them for lives of active citizenship.
- Large-scale, lasting change requires skilled individuals and effective organizations working for social and economic justice with a broad range of allies.
- Change takes time. Changing the conditions that cause persistent poverty is incremental, non-linear and long-term work that is dependent upon a combination of sound strategy, serendipity and intuition.

The Foundation seeks partners who share our mission and beliefs, and we honor the impact, integrity and creativity of people across our region already engaged in this work. We currently make grants to local, statewide and regional nonprofits in the Southeastern United States that have track records of helping low-wealth people build assets and transform economic conditions in their communities.

HOW MRBF HELPS PEOPLE AND PLACES MOVE OUT OF POVERTY

MRBF Inputs

1. Make grants and PRIs to local, statewide and regional nonprofits that have track records of helping low-wealth people build assets and transform economic conditions in their communities. Support learning with grantees.
2. Invest a portion of the Foundation's assets in PRIs and market-rate investments that contribute directly to economic development in low-wealth communities. Raise awareness and promote mission-related investments by foundations, with national partners.
3. Support and promote networks of funders (public, private and foundation) and practitioners to achieve larger-scale impact and attract larger investment. Participate in funding partnerships and collaboratives. Advocate with other funders for increased support for social and economic justice work in the South and for the region's most effective nonprofits.
4. Make grants to key regional infrastructure organizations and networks working on poverty and on organizational development support for nonprofits.
5. Participate in learning with grantees, PRI partners and funding/investment partners. Promote learning with partners through communications and dialogue.

Grantee and Partners Increase Their Capability

Greater financial support, organizational capacity, and community capacity for impact on poverty

More PRIs and market-rate investments in the Southeast; new financial investment vehicles

New funding partnerships and donors invest in larger-scale impact on poverty.

New or more effective infrastructure organizations and networks exist in the region for 1) moving people and places out of poverty; and 2) providing OD support to smaller organizations working on poverty.

Knowledge about "what works" in helping people and places move out of poverty is broadly used across the region to improve outcomes.

Outcomes: Grantees and Partners Contribute to Enabling Factors for Escaping Poverty

Interconnected Factors

- Personal Efficacy
- Education
- Financial investment
- Civic engagement/ leadership across differences
- Policy and systems change
- Networks/partnerships/ new infrastructure

Outcomes: Enabling Factors Contribute to Building Income and Assets

Increases in individual and family income and economic assets

- Assets retained; increases in assets
- Jobs retained and job advancement; increasing income

Increases in low-wealth community assets

- More public and private investment in businesses and infrastructure
- More local ownership of assets
- More community-controlled philanthropy

Some grantees and PRIs work directly on building income and assets

Ultimate Outcome

People and places move out of poverty

