



# Investing in a Whole Family Approach

Lessons from a 2Gen Grantmaking Strategy



A 2Gen or whole family approach holistically supports the entire family by integrating services for caregivers and children. Implementing a 2Gen approach can help organizations address the needs of all individuals, address structural and systemic barriers to educational and economic mobility, and contribute to positive changes for systems, organizations, and the families they serve.

In 2018, the William J. and Dorothy K. O'Neill Foundation (Foundation) initiated the two-generation (2Gen) Deep Impact Grantmaking (DIG) strategy, which provides multi-year support and partnership to organizations and communities committed to developing or deepening a 2Gen approach to serving families.

After six years, the 2Gen DIG strategy has supported the establishment of whole family approaches at grantee partner agencies and contributed to policy- and practice-change efforts at the national and local level. This brief summarizes grantee partner perceptions of how the 2Gen DIG strategy impacted organizations, systems, and families and shares lessons learned about factors that support successful implementation of a whole family approach.

- 20 Organizations received Foundation support to implement a 2Gen approach.
- 10 Grantee partners received planning or demonstration grants.
- 19 Grantee partners received implementation grants.
- 6 States in which grantee partners implemented new practices and partnerships to benefit families.

Our 2Gen work has really evolved with the use of this grant. We really became intentional about looking at the needs of the whole family.

Folks can't move forward unless everybody in the family system is able to thrive.

Expanding our reach through our partnerships has allowed us to fully implement a 2Gen focus.



2Gen DIG grantee partners and families who received services described many positive changes associated with implementing a 2Gen approach.



**Incorporating family voice helped grantee partners better serve their clients.** Developing parent advisory groups, implementing surveys or other feedback opportunities, and hiring former

clients or individuals with lived experience helped organizations ensure the voices of those affected informed program decisions and service delivery.



**Strong partnerships with other agencies helped organizations address each family member's needs.** Grantee partners built or strengthened partnerships

that enhanced access to services and facilitated service coordination.



**Updated intake processes reduced burden on families and removed barriers to service access.** Redesigning intake sessions, updating intake forms, and providing additional training for staff

made the intake process more efficient and effective.



**The 2Gen approach helped clients feel empowered and provided opportunities to expand their social networks.**

Elevating family voice, engaging families in decision making, and implementing family-centered coaching made clients feel valued and helped build self-confidence. Stronger relationships between service providers and clients and creating opportunities for parents to interact helped clients feel connected and build social capital.

**They made me feel like [part of] a big family that is fighting to open more doors for moms like me.**

-Grantee partner client

We're asking for levels of feedback that we've never asked about before, which really makes families feel valued and that their input makes a difference.

It takes a village and probably two or three interventions to really get all the way to 2Gen.

It provided them with some confidence, a belief they could do something different, that they could change the trajectory of their lives.

The Foundation's DIG approach facilitated 2Gen implementation across partner agencies. Grantee partners described strategies that supported successful implementation of a 2Gen approach and shared recommendations for funders and practitioners.



**Flexible funding.** The Foundation provided unrestricted funding and this flexibility helped partners redirect funds as needed to ensure services aligned with each family's unique goals and needs.



**Long-term investment.** Integrating services to support caregivers and children simultaneously takes time. Long-term investment allows organizations to build the partnerships and systems necessary to

implement a 2Gen approach.



**Strong partnerships.** Most organizations don't provide all services necessary to support all clients, and strong collaboration with partner agencies is an

important part of successful 2Gen implementation.



**Client engagement.** Gathering client feedback and incorporating family voice is an essential component of implementing a 2Gen approach and providing family-centered support.



**Staff buy-in.** Prioritizing buy-in early, and at all levels of an organization, can help shift culture to center the whole family.

One reason this worked is because it has been flexible enough.

We didn't realize how difficult it is and how intensive it is to really, seriously serve a whole family.

Make sure the voices of the families are always heard.

## Study Description

The William J. and Dorothy K. O'Neill Foundation (Foundation) contracted with James Bell Associates (JBA) to conduct an evaluation of the Foundation's 2Gen Deep Impact Grantmaking (DIG) strategy. JBA implemented the *2Gen DIG Strategy Assessment* study to meet the Foundation's goal of understanding the perceived impact of the 2Gen DIG strategy on systems, organizations, and families, as well as identifying facilitators and barriers to implementing a 2Gen approach. The one-year study began in July 2023 and ended in July 2024 and used a mixed-methods approach that included document reviews, a literature and resource review, a grantee questionnaire, and interviews with grantees, grantee clients, and experts in the 2Gen field. This brief highlights findings and lessons learned from 18 grantee and nine client interviews, and all quotations in the sidebars of this document reflect insights shared by 2Gen DIG grantee partners.

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