H 

istorically, programs focused on serving African-American males have struggled. In 1995, the Urban Institute described 51 “promising” or “effective programs.” Ten years later, three-quarters were no longer focused on black males. The 2008 Ford Foundation report Why We Can’t Wait describes the normative state for many practitioners as “operating in crisis mode.” The authors conclude, “The life cycles and capacity of organizations that serve African-American men and boys are significant issues that the philanthropic community must address.”

Six years later, nonprofit capacity continues to be a major concern for the field.

One prominent effort to invest in organizational development and capacity building is the Institute for Black Male Achievement, co-led by Root Cause and PolicyLink. The IBMA seeks to ensure the growth, sustainability, and impact of leaders and organizations that are improving life outcomes for black men and boys (see sidebar on p. 55). According to the IBMA, the top capacity areas that IBMA organizations prioritize for support are: 1) financial sustainability; 2) performance measurement and impact; and 3) strategy.

**LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT AND ORGANIZATIONAL MANAGEMENT**

In his role overseeing Echoing Green’s Black Male Achievement Fellows, Decker Ngongang supports social entrepreneurs to launch and sustain black male achievement-focused ventures. Ngongang does this by identifying strategies to support both the personal and professional growth of these social entrepreneurs. He may ask about their business plans or how they articulate impact, or he may seek to help them identify a mentor or push them to take a day off. For the many small and mid-sized nonprofit organizations engaged in this work, developing fundamental skills and positive life strategies is crucial.

By 2020, I see the IBMA as an institution that has over 20,000 members, leaders, and organizations that are connected to this work...I see the IBMA continuing to reinforce and drive those intangible feelings of hope and anticipation and translate those into outcomes on a local and national basis.

Shawn Dove, campaign manager, Open Society Foundations

To this end, the IBMA offers a host of opportunities and knowledge tools to address the questions Ngongang articulates. The Capacity Building and Sustainability Center offers everything from online resources to webinars to the Organizational and Leadership Capacity Assessment, which helps members identify their strengths and areas for improvement and generates a capacity-building action plan with steps and recommended resources to strengthen the improvement areas.

In July 2013, it selected seven leaders for its Social Innovation Accelerator, as a way to provide direct capacity-building support and
The IBMA works to tackle longstanding systemic barriers to black male achievement by supporting organizations and leaders to build capacity, forge connections, and advance policy change. Andrew Wolk, founder and CEO of Root Cause, states that the IBMA was “built to be around for decades, because the problem that we’re trying to tackle will take decades for inroads to actually be made.”

With the overarching goal of backing the creation of a robust movement for black male achievement, the IBMA offers various knowledge tools to support the countless number of networks, organizations, and leaders working to achieve equity for black men and boys. Some examples include providing capacity-building service grants, building a black male achievement life outcomes dashboard, managing five communities of practice, creating an online resource library, and launching the Social Innovation Accelerator, which works with a select group of leaders to surface innovative models for the black male achievement field.

“My 2020, I see the IBMA as an institution that has over 20,000 members, leaders, and organizations that are connected to this work,” predicts Dove. “I see the IBMA continuing to reinforce and drive those intangible feelings of hope and anticipation and translate those into outcomes on a local and national basis.”

also to showcase and spread what works in the field. In March 2014, the IBMA launched a grant opportunity for up to 20 organizations to access capacity-building services, funded through a grant pool it aims to grow over time.

**PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND CULTURAL COMPETENCE**

Successful programs invest considerable time and effort in professional development. Khary Lazarre-White of Brotherhood Sister Sol describes the intensive training of the organization’s staff and their ongoing education through brown bags and workshops as crucial to youth outcomes. Geoffrey Canada notes that Harlem Children’s Zone makes a conscious effort to employ black men throughout its programs. The visibility of positive role models, he believes, makes a difference for program participants.

At the same time, scholar Jawanza Kunjufu and others note that upwards of 80 percent of elementary school teachers are white females. Regardless of how successfully the minority leadership pipeline develops, these numbers will not shift dramatically in the near future. Thus, in education and other fields, a critical piece of professional development is cultural competence, or as Chris Chatmon of the Oakland Unified School District says, changing
“the behavior and the expectations and -isms within adults in the system.”

Cultural competence training includes not only awareness and sensitivity related to race and ethnicity, but also an understanding of how race intersects with gender, sexuality, and other identities. Joe Jones, for example, notes that service providers who want to work effectively with black males need to deconstruct notions of masculinity and understand the ways in which help-seeking behavior is influenced by ideas of what it means to be a “man.”

**FUNDRAISING AND FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY**

Nonprofit leaders working with black men and boys agree that there are rarely enough resources to deal with the size of the challenges. As Lazarre-White states, “Everybody I know is struggling.” Indeed, respondents to the IBMA member survey identified financial sustainability as their most important need by far.

The nonprofit sector commonly cites diversified funding as a core requirement for financial sustainability. While philanthropy is supporting and catalyzing much of the work related to black male achievement, sustainability of programs and organizations depends on a mix of private contributions, government grants, and fees for services. For example, in an effort to expand revenue streams beyond philanthropy, COSEBOC, a national network of school leaders serving boys and young men of color, is in the process of developing a menu of fee-for-service products. However, many nonprofits do not have development staff or fundraising capacity to diversify their funding and achieve financial stability.

**RESOURCES**

- **GrantSpace**
  - *Foundation Center*
  - Website offers information and resources to equip nonprofits with the know-how for securing funding and operating effective organizations.

- **Institute for Black Male Achievement, Capacity Building and Sustainability Center**
  - National membership network provides capacity-building resources to strengthen organizations serving black men and boys. Its Organizational and Leadership Capacity Assessment helps members identify strengths and areas for improvement.

For additional resources, visit: [bmafunders.org/beloved-community](http://bmafunders.org/beloved-community)