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SHARE OUR STRENGTH

A BE FEARLESS CASE STUDY

PRINCIPLES IN ACTION

LET URGENCY CONQUER FEAR:

Don't overthink and overanalyze. Do.

MAKE BIG BETS AND MAKE HISTORY:

Set audacious, not incremental, goals.

REACH BEYOND YOUR BUBBLE:

It's comfortable to go it alone. But innovation happens at intersections.

A sense of urgency compels the senior leadership team at Share Our Strength to make big bets aimed at ending childhood hunger in America.

SYNOPSIS/SUMMARY

Share Our Strength has been on the front lines of the war against poverty and hunger in the United States since 1984. Although it was clear that the organization's efforts were making a difference, Share Our Strength felt a sense of urgency around truly moving the needle on these issues. This prompted its leaders to make a big bet to meet the goal that mattered most: large-scale, transformational change that would end childhood hunger in America.

The following case study details how Share Our Strength created a new bold goal for the organization and how setting this goal required them to experiment with new strategies. Launching the No Kid Hungry campaign fundamentally changed how the organization engaged unlikely partners in its work to dramatically increase both resources and impact.



THE BACKGROUND

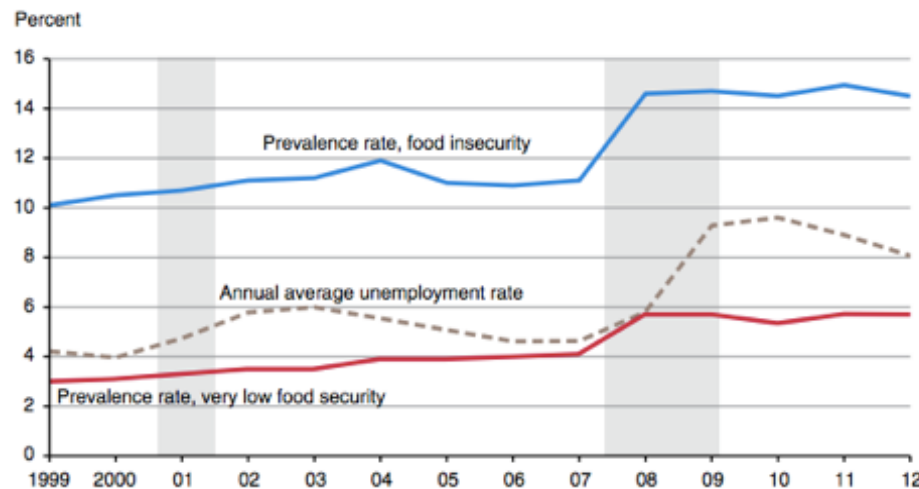
Share Our Strength has been fighting poverty and hunger since its founding in 1984. In its first 25 years, the organization operated primarily as a fundraiser and grantmaker, investing in local, national and international nonprofits fighting hunger and poverty. Share Our Strength raised funds by forming creative partnerships with the culinary industry to host its innovative Taste of the Nation events, as well as forming successful cause marketing relationships with companies like American Express to raise awareness and dollars. Between 1984 and 2009, Share Our Strength had successfully raised more than \$300 million for hunger and poverty organizations, mostly within the U.S.

This work drew attention to the issues of hunger and poverty and dramatically strengthened the emergency food relief system in the United States. While these efforts were making a clear difference in elevating hunger as a charitable cause, Share Our Strength was slowly realizing that playing the role of a “mutual fund for

anti-hunger organizations” was not adding up to the type of large-scale transformational change that they really wanted to see. And in the midst of successfully raising more philanthropic dollars for hunger than ever before, the Great Recession hit, making more families food insecure than a decade before. Unemployment rates and food prices rose, exacerbating the problem. To make matters worse, research indicated that many people did not recognize hunger as a problem in the country, while others viewed it as a problem that was too big to overcome.

Share Our Strength began to question whether their efforts were actually ending hunger. They needed clearer goals. They needed to think much bigger. They needed to change their strategy.

Prevalence of food insecurity, very low food security, and the national unemployment rate, 1999-2012



Note: Shaded areas indicate recessions. Source: Calculated by USDA, Economic Research Service using food security data from the Current Population Survey Food Security Supplement and unemployment statistics from the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

THE “AHA MOMENT”

In 2008, the senior leadership team at Share Our Strength assembled in a room to talk about the future of the organization. For the most part, all was going well; the organization’s key stakeholders and donors were pleased with the path the organization was on. Share Our Strength was generating income from new sources that they were effectively granting to their partners, they had formed partnerships with some of the leading chefs in the culinary industry, and press coverage on the organization was positive and plentiful.

Despite these successes, the air in the room was not one of celebration. Instead, there was a shared sense of urgency and discomfort. Unlike many other nonprofits, the pressure to do more, to really move the needle on hunger in the United States, was not coming from external stakeholders. The pressure was coming from within, from the organization’s top leaders, who felt like their hunger relief efforts, while important, were not adding up to the systemic changes that could eventually end hunger for good in the United States. Those in the room believed that the organization had reached a plateau; the only way to increase their impact was to dramatically change how they were approaching the problem.

For a period of six months, the senior leaders assessed the situation at hand. It became clear that the role that they historically had played was not enough to create transformational solutions for childhood hunger. The conversations resulted in a key revelation: the organization needed a new approach. They needed to put a stake in the ground to define the impact they desired. They needed to develop a more compelling narrative that would appeal to a wider audience and focus public attention. Most importantly, they needed a new set of strategies that built on their incredible assets but attacked the root of the problem in new ways.

THE *BE FEARLESS* RESPONSE

EMBRACING URGENCY AND MAKING A BIG BET

For Share Our Strength’s leadership, putting a stake in the ground meant setting a bold goal that extended beyond what the organization could accomplish alone. As a result, Share Our Strength set a goal to end childhood hunger in the United States, not just reduce it. The goal represented a new way of thinking that was not without risk; setting such an ambitious goal would inevitably garner skepticism and would require them to engage deeply with a new set of stakeholders—largely policy makers and government leaders who wield power over federal and state nutrition programs. Luckily for Share Our Strength, the goal was well timed in that regard. The newly elected Obama Administration made a commitment to end childhood hunger in the United States during its 2008 campaign, adding a new and exciting voice to the cause.

Setting a bold goal to end childhood hunger in America was a critical first step in giving the entire organization, as well as their network of partners and supporters, powerful new energy and focus.

Share Our Strength continued its role as grantor, but combined this role with a brand-new identity as program leader, able to bring investments, strategy and dedication to ending childhood hunger in America.

During their six-month period of reflection, Share Our Strength’s leadership came to an important realization: to grow this new identity, they needed a new brand for their work. They needed a simple, compelling narrative that a wide audience could understand and quickly get behind. With the support of its board, Share Our Strength took a second big risk, investing in a complete re-branding





effort, which culminated in the creation of a bold new campaign whose name was a declaration that couldn't be misinterpreted: No Kid Hungry. The No Kid Hungry (NKH) campaign became the new strategic focus of Share Our Strength: to ensure that every kid in America gets the three meals per day they need to thrive.

MAKING A BIG BET MEANT MAKING SOME BIG CHANGES

The newly-formed NKH campaign centered on three key strategies: move the needle, raise the funds and build momentum. With the launch of the campaign, Share Our Strength positioned itself as more than a grantmaker; they were now a programmatic leader and the national voice behind a coordinated effort to end childhood hunger. To move the needle, NKH works with partners to connect kids to the healthy food they need through programs like school breakfast and summer meals, while empowering low-income families to provide healthy meals on a tight budget through initiatives like its Cooking Matters program. Through its simple and compelling story, the NKH campaign provided a fundraising platform that allowed Share Our Strength to garner support from a wide array of audiences. They brought together key partners like Food Network, the Arby's Foundation and Wal-Mart, who shared a vision of ending childhood hunger. Through new fundraising initiatives like Dine Out for No Kid Hungry, restaurant goers around the country can now easily contribute in small ways by choosing to patronize restaurants that support the NKH campaign.

AS DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT
CHUCK SCOFIELD NOTES,

“Here was a simple campaign that everyone could understand and get behind.”

No Kid Hungry also focused on building national awareness about childhood hunger and its solution, inspiring people around the nation while showing them that ending childhood hunger is possible in their communities and a priority for the nation. The real power behind the NKH campaign lay in how the campaign's three strategies intersect to create a “consumer-facing” approach to social change: allowing a wide range of audiences, from policy makers and corporations to hunger solution providers and every-day people, to see the role they can play in ending childhood hunger.

BIG CHANGE #1: SET A GOAL THAT IS BIG ENOUGH TO MATTER, BUT SMALL ENOUGH TO WIN

Share Our Strength quickly learned, however, that setting a bold goal required a delicate balance of boldness and believability. As Founder and CEO Bill Shore notes,

“When you choose a bold goal, you need to pick one that is personally motivating to you and your colleagues, because you will need to sustain this over the long run. You need to be driving toward something that is going to excite and motivate you today, tomorrow, next week, and next year. While you want to select a bold goal that will motivate and inspire, you also want to set one that you believe, in time, can be achieved. For a bold goal like ending childhood hunger, this meant demonstrating the small wins along the way that were important to keeping the team excited and engaged.”

BIG CHANGE #2: PROVE THE CONCEPT WITH METRICS FIRST AND THEN SCALE

While Share Our Strength recognized that new strategies were needed to end childhood hunger in America, actually implementing the strategies required the organization to take on a host of new roles in which it had little experience. It had to become a capacity builder, program strategist, policy advocate and communicator, in addition to playing its traditional roles as fundraiser and grantmaker. Perhaps the most notable shift came from the recognition that to run a successful campaign, they needed to adopt the right mentality led by seasoned political strategists. The organization did not, however, have this expertise in-house.

In 2009, Share Our Strength hired Josh Wachs, a veteran political campaign strategist, as its Chief Strategy Officer. Early on in his tenure, Wachs emphasized the need to prove the NKH approach before it could be scaled nationally. He advocated using a tried and true campaign strategy that involved taking measured, tactical risks: focusing on winning small scale, critical territories and establishing credibility for the model there before expanding. As Wachs explains, “When we looked at presidential elections, we saw how critical the state of Iowa was in the outcome. Winning Iowa in 2008, for example, was crucial for giving President Obama the credibility he needed to galvanize political and fundraising support, while the same held true for Ronald Reagan in 1980 in New Hampshire.

“The same idea holds true for our work. We needed to put a vast majority of our resources in operating the campaign within a few ‘proof of concept’ states.

By proving that childhood hunger could be eliminated in two proof of concept states (Arkansas and Maryland) and simultaneously laying the groundwork by making considerable progress in 18 additional strategic states, the organization would be able to test its methods, hone its approaches, discard what didn’t work and establish credibility in its model. These wins could then support a future national scaling of the NKH campaign. This campaign mentality solidified the proof of concept approach that Share Our Strength would take in implementing the NKH campaign.

To keep its staff and board members abreast of its wins and challenges, Share Our Strength developed an organization-wide dashboard that captures key metrics for measuring progress towards success. This dashboard helps to track all aspects of its work—from fundraising to progress against key milestones in proof of concept states—and enables the entire organization (all staff are provided access) to celebrate successes and learn from failures along the way. As such, the tool has helped the organization to communicate the early wins of the NKH Campaign and course correct where necessary. For example, the dashboard helps Share Our Strength track metrics associated with access to increasing participation in school breakfast in Arkansas and Maryland—an important metric for ending childhood hunger in each state. While it will take time for the organization to be able to say that the majority of eligible low-income kids who need a free school breakfast have access to one, they can track progress in each state on a quarterly basis.

The ability to track short-term gains has allowed the organization to test new approaches and quickly recognize when something is not working—a critical step in validating their approach to tackling such an ambitious goal.





Most importantly, focusing on significant but achievable “proof of concept” states and tracking progress closely through a dashboard has helped the leadership team to make decisions that prevent “scope-creep” within the organization.

AS SHORE NOTES,

“Most [strategic] questions answer themselves because they either lend themselves to advancing progress [against the dashboard] or they do not.”

The organization’s commitment to measuring its progress is further seen through their hiring of a Director of Measurement and Planning. In this position, they have created the capacity internally to use data in a more rigorous way and to more seriously measure and track outcomes. Share Our Strength treats the dashboard as an accountability tool internally, but also as a learning tool for its proof of concept approach. Throughout the year each key metric is measured and coded green, red or yellow to indicate their success in advancing each. In this way, the dashboard serves as a constant reminder of their priorities, but also a trigger to help them to see where they need to improve or change their approach.

BIG CHANGE #3: CONCENTRATE RESOURCES AND CROSS-COLLABORATE FOR IMPACT

While its new proof of concept strategy allowed Share Our Strength to experiment with new solutions and focus its resources, it also created some interesting challenges for fundraising. While the organization has always had a level of flexibility from a diverse pool of funding, including earned income and unrestricted

dollars, channeling financial and human resources towards eliminating childhood hunger in two the proof of concept states (while continuing to make progress in 18 other states) required a dramatic change in how Share Our Strength distributed the funds it raised.

Historically, funds were invested in the communities where they were raised. With a campaign based approach, those funds needed to be channeled into the proof of concept territories. Funneling resources to a smaller number of more targeted locations meant reinvesting funds raised in one community for use in another community. As a result, Share Our Strength faced a daunting challenge: convincing its stakeholders and partners in those communities that would no longer be benefiting from funding that this was the right strategy.

They focused on articulating critical victories for kids, communicating measurable returns on investments to stakeholders and tracking how each of these victories acted as a catalyst to new successes.

Working with the most effective local partners in states around the country, NKH was able to turn the hard-won knowledge about what worked best to spur new investment and turn experience into tools that others could use in their own communities.

In addition to refocusing funds toward campaign states, and in order keep its laser focus on the NKH campaign, the organization also needed to think in a more integrated way, better connecting its implementation partners in the field with its internal communication, funding and advocacy strategies.

To do this, the organization created cross-departmental teams, with programmatic staff engaging regularly with strategic planning, communications and development staff. The organization's strategic planning and budgeting processes were completed collaboratively.

AS SCOFIELD NOTES,

“We sit at the table together so when we work on our fundraising plan it is built right off of the programmatic strategy. We have dedicated cross-departmental staff that connect the dots between communications, programs, and fundraising in order to stay aligned on key priorities”

By thinking in an integrated way, they were able to focus and align their resources towards the common objectives of advancing the NKH campaign. This cross-collaboration also enabled the team to reflect on how their assets could be used in new ways to support the campaign. For example, NKH works with Academy Award-winning actor Jeff Bridges, who used his celebrity to bring together school superintendents in Arkansas to talk about school breakfast strategies with NKH and the governor. Share Our Strength also has considerable relationships with chefs in the culinary industry who have dedicated their time to producing dining events to raise funds for the organization. The NKH campaign provided an opportunity for these same chefs to use their position of influence and celebrity to raise awareness of childhood hunger issues. Through this integrative thinking, the organization has been able to better leverage its assets and use them in new ways.

BIG CHANGE #4: EXPAND YOUR NETWORK; IT TAKES (MORE THAN) A VILLAGE

Making the decision to tackle a huge issue at scale also forced Share Our Strength to embrace new approaches to partnership and influence. Wachs, Shore and other members of the senior team knew that they wouldn't be able to end childhood hunger without engaging key decision-makers across multiple sectors. Share Our Strength needed to reach beyond its bubble to engage new and different partners in its campaign. The organization had to create a network that included not only providers offering hunger solutions in their communities, but also private citizens, government officials, school leaders, parents and major consumer-facing corporations, all marching toward the same goal.

To widen its circle, Share Our Strength worked to connect childhood hunger to other pressing national social problems. From time spent deep in political campaigns, Wachs knew that it was essential to connect hunger to other critical issues that were front and center in the national dialogue. The best way to inspire decision-makers to care about hunger is to show its direct connection to outcomes they already care about, such as education and healthcare. To do so, Share Our Strength engaged Deloitte, a national management-consulting firm, in a pro-bono project to better understand these complex connections. Deloitte's research helped to quantify the direct connections between hunger and a number of preventable and costly health outcomes, and make clear links between hunger and both school attendance and classroom performance. For example, Deloitte's research found that students in schools that made it easier for kids to get a healthy breakfast by serving it in the classroom, as the state of Maryland had,





earned an average of 17.5 percent higher math scores on state tests – a compelling statistic for anyone who has a vested interest in educational performance.

In addition to understanding the broader social and economic impacts of childhood hunger, the organization is also focused on forging new corporate partnerships that bring both financial resources and the immense power of large corporate networks. For example, Arby's Foundation invested in NKH summer hunger efforts, including a national texting campaign and in-store outreach program to alert families to free, federally funded summer meals in their communities. These efforts will ultimately connect kids across the country with more than 24 million additional summer meals by the end of 2015.

THE RESULTS

By letting a sense of urgency move the needle farther and faster on childhood hunger, Share Our Strength made a big bet that reinvigorated the organization and propelled the growth necessary for real impact. Since launching the NKH campaign, the organization's budget has grown dramatically from \$16M in 2007 to more than \$40M today, which it has strategically re-invested in order to have incredible, tangible impact on childhood hunger. Since the launch of the NKH Campaign, more than one million children have been connected with additional meals. Share Our Strength's Cooking Matters nutrition education program has helped over 100,000 families learn how to shop for and cook healthy meals on a tight budget. Participation in the school breakfast program has reached record levels, reaching a majority of eligible children (instead of a minority) for the first time in the program's history.

Share Our Strength has been a powerful voice lobbying Congress to protect food assistance programming, such as SNAP and SNAP-Ed, which provides low-income families with nutritional education. Through leveraging its network, over 100,000 emails and calls were placed

to Congress in 2013 alone. These advocacy efforts have achieved policy victories, such as influencing the United States Department of Agriculture to re-evaluate its summer meal feeding site eligibility guidelines, increasing the number of areas deemed eligible and giving more kids access to summer meals.

The NKH campaign has also increased awareness of childhood hunger by attracting a number of influential and well-known people to support the cause, including actor Jeff Bridges. This support has led to more awareness building, such as when Bridges joined NKH at both the Democratic and Republican Presidential nominating conventions in 2012 to raise awareness for childhood hunger with governors and USDA Secretary Tom Vilsack. The creation of the NKH Center for Best Practices, which serves as a go-to resource for those working on childhood hunger nationally, is helping to equip the country to advance the cause. The Center houses a number of toolkits, case studies, and other free resources, including materials that may be used to engage with elected officials, that make it easier for the hunger community to implement solutions. Individuals in all 50 states have accessed these resources over 33,000 times.

In 2014, Share Our Strength was awarded a \$6M grant from the Social Innovation Fund (SIF), a White House initiative and a program of the Corporation for National and Community Service, further validating the NKH strategy, its scalability and its potential to create transformational social change. The SIF is designed to financially support proven, effective strategies and ideas that have the potential to solve problems at the scale they exist. This award recognizes the big bet Share Our Strength took in tackling a seemingly intractable issue and the progress it has made thus far. More importantly, it will allow the organization to scale its NKH strategy into new communities and represents a big bet by government that transformational change can happen on the issue of childhood hunger in America.



Guiding Discussion Questions (For Funders and Nonprofits)

When was the last time you let a sense of urgency drive your objectives?



To what extent might developing a bold goal or making a big bet reinvigorate your efforts?



What changes would be needed in order to reorient your focus towards transformational vs. incremental change?



How are you using metrics to drive your grantmaking or your programming? How might you make use of metrics in a more focused way to understand your impact or to keep your team engaged for the long haul?



To what extent do you approach partnerships from the perspective of the potential benefits to them as opposed to expecting partnership on the basis of goodwill?



How might broadening the base of partners support your work?



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