

## **Initiative: Allies Network**

### ***Issue (what is the problem or issue we are trying to solve?):***

**Big Problem:** Intergenerational poverty results in a cycle of systemic obstacles and outcomes such as low academic performance, low graduation rates, higher teen pregnancy rates, higher drug use and higher crime rates.

**Right Sized Problem:** Disadvantaged, disengaged and at risk youth (“disadvantaged youth”) have no or nominal social capital.

### ***Key Insight (fact, data or other research basis for innovation):***

- 1) Research shows that social capital, defined as the network of people who are tapped when needed for problem-solving or opportunity advancement, is foundational to helping youth overcome all of the elements of being disadvantaged and to enabling youth to thrive to the best of their ability and situation
- 2) Approximately 16M children are disadvantaged, i.e. live in either low-income or poor families
- 3) Mentors often provide critical forms of social capital. There are 2-2.5M volunteer mentors and fewer than 1K paid mentors in the US (“Mentors”)
  - a. There are millions of natural mentors, people like teachers, coaches and religious leaders who actively support and help individual youths succeed (“Natural Mentors”)
  - b. Research shows that mentors provide relatively modest overall positive effect, which we believe would be improved if they had better tools and networks.

### ***Goal (what exactly are we trying to accomplish?):***

Provide substantial ACTIVE (defined below) social capital to youth who would functionally be unable to build it themselves. Stimulate use and expansion of the active social capital (“ASC”)

### ***Metrics (what will we track to see if we are accomplishing goal?):***

- TBD

### ***Target Users/Beneficiaries/Residents:***

- Primary: Mentors and the youth they support
- Secondary: Natural Mentors and the youth they support
- Tertiary (if any): Parents, legal guardians and other primary care-givers (“Parents”); Youth Service Organizations

### ***Description of the solution/activity/initiative:***

**Allies Network App:** There are two primary innovations in Allies Network. First is the evolution of social capital into Active Social Capital. Secondly, the development of a digital platform built to deliver Active Social Capital (“Platform”) with the initial implementation focused on disadvantaged youth and their mentors (“Allies Network” or the “App”).

#### **Definitions:**

**Active Social Capital (“ASC”):** Traditionally, social capital is defined as a network of people who are tapped when needed for problem-solving or opportunity advancement. Traditional social capital is *passive*: the network waits to be activated. This may work for people who have a privileged background, but low-income youth lack the ability to develop their network much less activate it.

We propose the development of a new kind of social capital, one that is *actively* created for targeted youth and *actively* seeks to assist them – *before* being engaged. Active Social Capital (ASC) evolves social capital by synergistically connecting helpful people (human capital), needed resources (economic capital) and useful content (information capital). While Active Social Capital can be engaged ad-hoc by youth, it is distinguished by its active approach. Importantly, it can provide 24/7 access, support and participation until the youth achieves their goals, solves their problems or secures their opportunities.

- **Human Capital** includes networks parents, care-givers and family; groups inside a YSO (“Organizations that have volunteer or paid mentors for youth”) such as other mentors, donors, alumni and administration; systems like schools, foster care and health care; natural mentors like teachers and religious leaders; other YSOs; and networks of caring adults such as business people on LinkedIn or athletes on a pro sports team. All of these people collective are referred to as allies.
- **Economic Capital** is money as well as products and services that cost money. Economic Capital comes from a wide variety of sources including individuals, local and international companies and organizations.
- **Information Capital** is content, data, links and other information that is relevant and usefully designed for the user, such as videos, infographics and games that teach student how to apply to college or interview for a job. Information Capital would be curated within Allies Network to ensure best of breed content and to minimize the inefficiency inherent in searching the web.

#### **Summary of How Allies Network App Works:**

- 1) **Set Up:** YSO customize app to align to their brand and goals. YSO also populates app with their information capital; establish permissions for all parties; and decide on human capital groups to include.
  - a. **Note:** The creators of the App would take the lead on populating it with Economic Capital from national and regional sources such as foundations, retailers and manufacturers; with Information Capital from trusted sources; and with Human

Capital networks outside of the YSO such as LinkedIn, Screen Actors Guild, the NBA, American Bar Association, and National Park Service.

- 2) **Mentors Sign On:** Mentors sign in, take short online tutorial, and invite all the youth they mentor to join.
- 3) **Youth Sign On:** Working with the Mentors, the youth sign up, customize and select who will be included in the Human Capital part of their network.
- 4) **Use It:** The mentor provides appropriate level of training to the youth. They then begin using the app depending on their current needs. Based on research with YSOs, these needs include:
  - a. Peer-to-peer problem-solving where mentors help mentors and youth help youth solve problems sent directly or posted to community
  - b. Access Information Capital on a wide range of relevant topics
  - c. Quickly secure Economic Capital resources
  - d. Grow personally by advancing academics (ex: do better in school, get into college), securing employment (including volunteering and internships), developing critical life skills (ex: financial literacy, emotional regulation), etc.
  - e. Initiate “challenges” where youth or mentor set up a concrete goal with steps and timing. Allies are invited to help the youth achieve the goals. The app coordinates the activity of all the allies as that youth pursues her/his goal.
  - f. Broadcast events, opportunities, and activities to youth, mentors and the entire YSO community
  - g. Automatic alerts sent among key allies to make responses and interventions on behalf of youth much faster and effective
  - h. Simple tools for setting goals and/or commitments, getting notices and reminders to help ensure successful attainment
- 5) **Analysis and Reporting:** The app provides automatic analysis and reporting that can be used by both the mentor and the YSO to improve performance, increase donor engagement, and reduce paperwork.

**Note:** that the Allies Network is a tool and resource that the youth fully takes responsibility for at age 18, and can continue to use and expand as s/he grows.

**Note:** Given Santa Fe’s size, we would want to test launching Allies Network with schools simultaneously with YSOs.

***How this is Innovative:*** To the best of our knowledge, the following are innovations for cities:

- 1) Active Social Capital as a more effective than the traditional social capital model
- 2) The Allies Network app itself
- 3) The Platform that underlies the Allies Network. Notably, that Platform could be applied to a wide range of situations with ASC would provide a meaningful benefit such as early childhood intervention programs, college placement counsellors and coaches, weight loss programs and healthcare teams (ex: My Health Teams).

### *Benefits:*

*Functional (how does this make work and/or life better?):* Allies Network empowers caring adults of all kinds, including mentors, to systematically address many or all of the factors of being disadvantaged simultaneously. The app is also “plug and play”. It comes prepopulated with Human, Economic and Information Capital. It is easy for the YSO to add to the Capital(s) and to customize the app to their brand, goals, strategies, management and community.

- *Emotional (how do we expect people to feel after receiving functional benefit?):* Empowered, connected, supported
- *Financial (how much revenue, profit or wealth does this create and/or cost savings does it generate, if any?):* At its inception, the Allies Network will require investment and will return nominal revenues. In the longer term, there is a business model whereby a private-public partnership or a B-Corporation is created to commercialize the Platform and use a portion of the earnings to subsidize the free use of Allies Network for all YSOs.
- *Social (how does this benefit the community at large?):* As youth develop and utilize active social capital, families and communities benefit as the youth experience many positive outcomes, including but not limited to, increase intellectual and social development, reduce academic attrition, increase academic performance, increase sources of employment and occupational attainment, reduce juvenile delinquency, and reduce unwanted teen pregnancy.

### *Alignment:*

- *Briefly explain how this can be expanded to other cities. Will it be relatively easy or hard?* This would be relatively easy to expand into other cities since apps are inherently scalable and there are nominal financial requirements for a YSO to adopt.