



AMERICAN  
COMMUNITIES  
TRUST

Building Social Impact



Community Impact  
and Investment  
Strategy:

Meals on Wheels, Inc.  
of Tarrant County, Texas



# Background



**M**eals On Wheels, Inc. of Tarrant County is a not-for-profit charitable organization that has been providing home-delivered meals, professional case management, and an array of other important programs and services to elderly and/or disabled homebound residents since 1973. A new 63,000-square-foot facility is already under construction, which will provide for expanded services including an additional 500,000 meals each year delivered to the community. The new facility will also provide a volunteer training center for the 4,000+ meal-delivery volunteers on which the organization heavily relies. It is a significant project that will have meaningful long-term impacts on vulnerable residents of North Texas. According to the 2013 American Community Survey (ACS), 19.3% of the population of Tarrant County lives in poverty—5.3% higher than the national average.

The new facility was financed, in part, with New Markets Tax Credits—a federal program created by Congress in 2000 to spur new or increased investments into operating businesses and real estate projects located in low-income communities. Urban Action Community Development (UACD), a Maryland-based Community Development Entity (CDE) provided New Markets Tax Credits to the Meals On Wheels project. Since 2007, UACD has successfully deployed \$167 million of federal New Markets Tax Credit allocation into projects that stabilize and strengthen neighborhoods.

American Communities Trust (ACT) is a national community development partner dedicated to “building social impact” in urban and low-income areas across the U.S. ACT partners with UACD to maximize the local impact of its investments on low-income communities. ACT carries out this work by developing and implementing a community impact strategy around each real-estate investment, and by administering a community impact fund to benefit low-income individuals around the project investment.

# The ACT Approach

ACT has been honing its community impact approach since 2008, and has achieved significant outcomes. ACT's impacts include:



ACT's community benefits strategies are focused on partnerships with local stakeholders, customized and targeted to fit the individualized needs of a specific community. ACT's strategy is to proactively reduce disparities and address inequities through its investments and hands-on collaboration with community-based organizations.

To implement this approach, ACT has staff working on the ground with local partners in order to identify the most successful strategies for creating long-term impacts. ACT focuses on a comprehensive approach that involves a community benefits plan, local stakeholder engagement, partnership with service-based nonprofits, strategic investments, and multi-year evaluation of impacts.





# .....► Strategy for ..... ► Tarrant County



In order to develop the community benefits strategy for the project, the ACT team carried out a broad community assessment, including several site visits to Tarrant County and meetings with a number of local stakeholders and nonprofit leaders.

## Community Benefits Agreement

The ACT team was heavily engaged in the production of the Community Benefits Agreement (CBA) for the Meals On Wheels Project. The CBA is a key document for ensuring that a development project has meaningful community benefits, that those benefits are recorded in writing, that they are attainable, and that they can be evaluated over time. ACT helped to negotiate a robust CBA for the project, and ACT will be instrumental in evaluating the success of the project in meeting the goals of the CBA and reporting on those impacts.

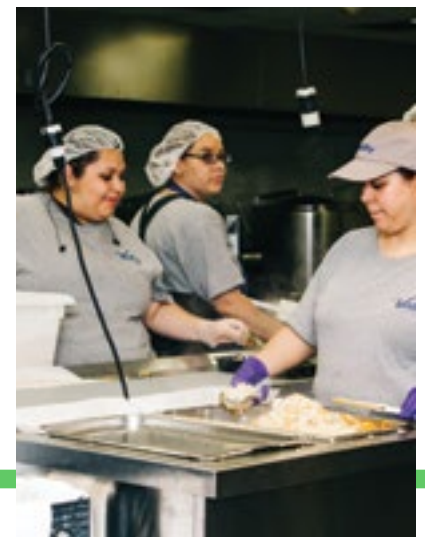


# Capacity Building

The core of ACT's approach relies on going beyond the Community Benefits Agreement, and using its own sweat-equity coupled with financial investments to build capacity for local organizations. ACT will continue to work on the ground to carry out the following services for local nonprofits and community-based organizations:

## Ongoing Support Services

- Evaluation and reporting on local outcomes
- Technical assistance and counseling
- Fundraising and grant writing assistance
- Stakeholder engagement
- Strategic planning
- Sharing national best practices



# Investment Strategy



Through its partnership with UACD, ACT administers a community impact fund to provide grants and low interest loans intended to serve vulnerable populations. ACT often seeks to use its funds to leverage additional financial and in-kind support. In Tarrant County ACT has identified two key partners to receive \$30,000 of grant support that meet the desired goals of ACT and the project stakeholders, and that have a

synergistic relationship with the real estate project. These organizations are NPower and Wesley Mission Center. ACT selected these organizations for their focus on providing job training and adult education to vulnerable populations within the low-income Census tract in which the new Meals On Wheels facility is located. The goal of ACT's investments is always to maximize the creation of jobs and employment readiness within target geographies, so to enhance or supplement the jobs created by the real estate project, itself.



## Partner Profile: NPower

NPower is an organization located throughout North America, with a major presence in Texas and a mission of helping veterans reengage in the civilian workforce through partnerships with the tech community. NPower's Technology Service Corps program serves veterans ages 21 through 40 who are eager to transfer their military experience and develop new skills toward a career in technology. The program hosts two class cycles per year, beginning in January and July, with each running a total of 20 weeks, including 13 weeks of class-based training and seven weeks of paid apprenticeship.

The University of Texas at Arlington (UTA) is providing space for NPower's classes and operations in North Texas.

Launched in May 2013, The Dallas Technology Service Corps program has served 169 individuals so far. Of those 72% were unemployed at the start of the program. Over 80% of students secured employment with some of the country's top employers six months after completion, and the average hourly wage for individuals completing the program is \$21.59.



## Partner Profile: The Wesley Mission Center

The Wesley Mission Center is a nonprofit organization based in Tarrant County, focused on empowering people on their journey to economic self-sufficiency and wholeness. The center provides financial assistance, resources, and customized action plans focusing on intervention and prevention methods that support a household's success. Wesley Mission

Center facilitates the Jobs for Life national eight-week job training program, in partnership with the Mansfield Chamber of Commerce, where each participant is partnered with a mentor and taught job and life skills, concluding with a graduation ceremony at the conclusion of the program.





# Impact

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CT prioritizes its community investments by focusing on programs that will impact the quality of life for low-income community residents in the project area. ACT supports and funds programs that have evidence-based outcomes. Anticipated impacts for Tarrant County are as follows:

## Project impacts

- 126 construction jobs

## Meals On Wheels

- 2,295 additional clients served and 3.5 million additional meals
- 10% of direct hires and 80% of contracted jobs to be held by low income persons, with at least 54% of permanent jobs paying a living wage, and at least 30% accessible to persons with no more than a high school degree

## NPower

- 490 new program participants
- 80% of graduates entering employment within six months of completing the program

## Wesley Mission Center

- 140 students over three years completing GED and vocational training

As ACT becomes more deeply connected within Tarrant County and develops a relationship with these local organizations, the outcomes will continue to grow. ACT's long-term place-based approach has proven successful at building lasting relationships to increase the capacity of community-based groups. The ACT team looks forward to continuing its work in Tarrant County, the latest community where ACT is focused on "building social impact."





# ← Strategy ..... Impact

- **Invest** in programing that connects with ACT's and UACD's priorities.
- Facilitate community collaborations with **NPower, MOWI, Wesley Mission Center,** and **corporate partners.**

- **Increased incomes and decreased unemployment** that provides long-term economic development through workforce development and training

# ..... Results

- **NPower expansion** which directly engages Fort Worth high risk veterans.
- **Wesley Mission Center's developing job readiness and GED program.**



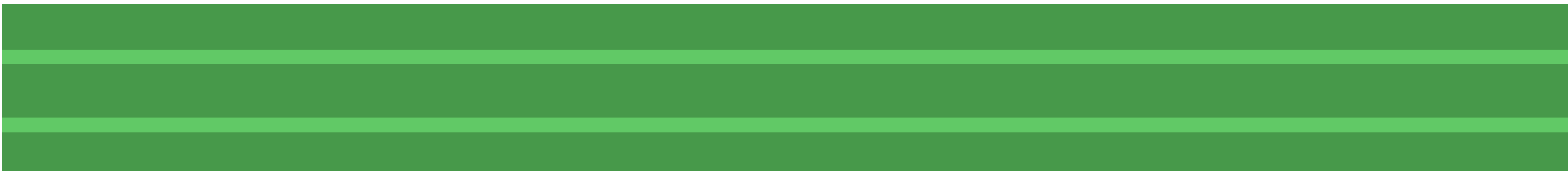
# Evaluating Impacts



ACT believes it is critical to accurately evaluate social impacts, but there is no one-size-fits-all approach. ACT has developed a flexible set of tools to identify and evaluate program outcomes, and to quantify both their social and financial return on investment.



ACT works closely with its partners to put in place evaluation frameworks or strengthen existing evaluation mechanisms. The goals are to ensure maximal return on investment, while establishing a structure that will allow programs will be long-term sustainable beyond ACT's investment.





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