



Slingshot Impact Assessment: Advance Memphis

October 2018

Executive summary

- Zip codes **38126 and 38106 are two of the poorest in the country**, and Advance Memphis provides vital services to 38126 and 38106 residents
- Slingshot developed a four-dimension assessment tool to **assess partners' impact**, applaud strengths, and identify opportunities for improvement
- The Slingshot Impact Assessment assesses and **allocates ratings on four dimensions**: benefit-cost ratio, use of best practices, measurement infrastructure, and systems-level change
- Advance Memphis scores **“at least strong” on three of four dimensions** of the Slingshot Impact Assessment, demonstrating positive impact on its program participants
- The estimated **benefit-cost ratio is “at least strong,”** driven primarily by part-time job placements for Work Life graduates; Advance also generates 65% of its operating budget through earned revenue
- Advance Memphis' **use of best practices is “at least strong,”** evidenced by the rigor with which the Work Life curriculum was developed and adapted from Jobs for Life
- Advance Memphis' **measurement infrastructure is “at least strong,”** as Advance Memphis has successfully adopted Salesforce to collect, track, and analyze data to improve its programs
- **Systems-level change is rated “at least neutral,”** given some evidence of Advance Memphis' impact on peers and non-profit leaders in spite of systems-level change not being core to Advance's mission
- Slingshot recommends Advance Memphis **continue to improve its data collection processes** to include tracking of participants while progressing through programs and collecting outcomes data for graduates

Zip codes 38126 and 38106 have long been known as two of the most impoverished, underserved zip codes in the country

Landscape and needs

- As of 2017, 38126 has a 55% labor force participation rate, lower than Memphis' 64% city-wide rate
- The 38126 unemployment rate is 17%, which is more than 4X the Memphis overall unemployment rate
- The neighborhood's poverty rate is 60%, which is more than double the city's rate of 27%
- 18% of 38126 residents lack a high school diploma, significantly reducing their earnings and future wage growth
- Only 4% of 38126 residents have a bachelor's degree or higher
- Home ownership in 38126 is ~15%, compared to 50% for Memphis overall

Equivalent programs

- There are very few job training programs immediately accessible to 38126 residents
- The nearest program to Advance Memphis is the Workforce Investment Network (WIN), which is just over 1 mile north
- Lack of access to reliable transportation could make WIN an unusable option for many 38126 residents
- Advance Memphis provides a unique service within the zip code

Slingshot developed a tool to assess our partners' work, to illuminate successes and highlight areas for improvement

Purpose and uses of the Slingshot Impact Assessment

- **Objectively assess** the quality and impact of partners' poverty-fighting work
- Enhance Slingshot's **understanding of partners' impact** across multiple dimensions
- Establish **context and a basis for conversation** with Slingshot partners about the impact of their work
- Identify potential **opportunities for improvement and areas for collaboration** between Slingshot and its partners
- Assess partners **over time** with regular updates to the assessment

The Slingshot Impact Assessment is comprised of four dimensions



Benefit-cost ratio

- Estimates benefits produced by a partner compared to costs of producing benefits
- Incorporates partner data and best in class research to develop rigorous valuations of benefit



Use of best practices

- Assesses the extent to which a partner's programs use best practices
- Assesses an organization's ongoing development toward best practices



Measurement infrastructure

- Evaluates the extent to which an organization has a measurement infrastructure
- Assesses the use of measurement and data to increase program effectiveness



Systems-level change

- Evaluates the extent to which an organization affects poverty-fighting change at a broader level
- Includes influencing best practice development, policy changes/adoption, broader poverty-fighting research, etc.

Advance Memphis earns an “at least strong” rating on three of four dimensions

Dimensions	Unclear	Negative	At least neutral	At least strong	Very strong
 <p>Benefit-cost ratio</p>	Lack of sufficient research findings in focus area to support confident estimation of benefit	Costs exceed estimated benefits	Benefits and costs similar	Benefits exceed costs	Benefits substantially exceed costs
 <p>Use of best practices</p>	Indiscernible best practices in focus area or insufficient data on partner’s practices	Practices considered problematic or damaging	Limited or no evidence for use of best practices	Some evidence for use of best practices and better practices are developing	Current best practices are consistently followed
 <p>Measurement infrastructure</p>	Unclear what measurement infrastructure is most relevant for area of focus	Measurement practices or use of data can be harmful to partner or its beneficiaries	Limited or no measurement infrastructure; no use to improve impact	Strong measurement infrastructure; limited use to improve impact	Strong measurement infrastructure; consistently used to improve impact
 <p>Systems-level change</p>	Standard for “positive impact” unclear or disputed by stakeholders	Evidence of negative impact on ecosystem	Limited or no evidence of impact on ecosystem in Memphis	Some evidence of positive impact on ecosystem in Memphis	Evidence of powerful, positive impact on ecosystem in Memphis and/or beyond

Advance Memphis' benefits exceed costs, earning it an "at least strong" benefit-cost ratio

Dimensions	Unclear	Negative	At least neutral	At least strong	Very strong
 <p>Benefit-cost ratio</p>	Lack of sufficient research findings in focus area to support confident estimation of benefit	Costs exceed estimated benefits	Benefits and costs similar	Benefits exceed costs	Benefits substantially exceed costs

Explanation of evidence

- Most value created by Advance Memphis is in job training and placement through placement in part-time jobs
- The majority of Work Life graduates find part-time work, which explains why part-time jobs have an outsized impact
- One in seven graduates find full-time employment, which creates a larger earnings benefit per individual
- Additional monetized benefits:
 - Entrepreneurship programs
 - High school equivalency test prep classes
 - Financial empowerment and literacy
 - Mental health supports
- Slingshot adjusted the time horizon for job training benefits from 30 years down to 6 based on research that shows the benefits fade over a 6 year time horizon

Stand-out strengths

- Successful placement in part-time and full-time jobs through the Work Life program is a stand-out strength
- 65% of Advance's operating budget is funded by generating revenue, primarily from its staffing service

Opportunities for improvement

- Evaluate and consider Advance's organizational priorities in context of the programs and services that deliver the most benefit to recipients



Advance Memphis' use of best practices are "at least strong," given the rigorous development of its Work Life curriculum

Dimensions	Unclear	Negative	At least neutral	At least strong	Very strong
 Use of best practices	Indiscernible best practices in focus area or insufficient data on partner's practices	Practices considered problematic or damaging	Limited or no evidence for use of best practices	Some evidence for use of best practices and better practices are developing	Current best practices are consistently followed

Explanation of evidence

- Advance Memphis implements quality curricula for their main job training program
- A continuous quality feedback loop is used to inform program improvements
- Work Life was developed from the Jobs for Life curriculum, which has been rigorously evaluated and found to produce benefits
- The Work Life curriculum was rewritten with assistance from the Chalmers Center

Stand-out strengths

- The Work Life program's quality and roots in the Jobs for Life curriculum lends it legitimacy, given its proven outcomes
- Advance Memphis' uses a continuous quality feedback loop to improve programs

Opportunities for improvement

- Ensure additional wrap-around programs are adhering to best practices

Advance Memphis' measurement structure is "at least strong," partially due to their recent successful transition to Salesforce (1/2)

Dimensions	Unclear	Negative	At least neutral	At least strong	Very strong
 <p>Measurement infrastructure</p>	Unclear what measurement infrastructure is most relevant for area of focus	Measurement practices or use of data can be harmful to partner or its beneficiaries	Limited or no measurement infrastructure; no use to improve impact	Strong measurement infrastructure; limited use to improve impact	Strong measurement infrastructure; consistently used to improve impact

Explanation of evidence

- Data measurement infrastructure has significantly improved over the past year
- Advance successfully migrated to Salesforce to handle daily operations and procedures
- The shift to Salesforce has facilitated improved data measurement and analysis
- Advance collects a wide range of information on its program participants, the courses it teaches, and attendance/graduation data

Stand-out strengths

- Advance's use of Salesforce creates a strong feedback mechanism
- Advance's collection of demographic and baseline data on its participants supports impact measurement

Opportunities for improvement

- Improve tracking of participants' progress through Advance Memphis programs
- Improve tracking of graduates' labor market activity and post program outcomes (e.g., length of employment, wages, and profession)
- Improve tracking of HiSet pass rates and Launch program job creation

Advance Memphis' measurement structure is "at least strong," partially due to their recent successful transition to Salesforce (2/2)

Dimensions	Unclear	Negative	At least neutral	At least strong	Very strong
 Measurement infrastructure	Unclear what measurement infrastructure is most relevant for area of focus	Measurement practices or use of data can be harmful to partner or its beneficiaries	Limited or no measurement infrastructure; no use to improve impact	Strong measurement infrastructure; limited use to improve impact	Strong measurement infrastructure; consistently used to improve impact
Measurement practices & processes	Insufficient access to systems and/or information to support evaluation	No or inappropriate procedures for data measurement; lack of rules for handling sensitive data	Measurement objectives exist but insufficient metrics are tracked and used	Clear objectives with procedures to regularly collect and use data to improve programs	Clear objectives with data consistently processed, analyzed, and used in decision-making
Data collection	Insufficient access to systems and/or information to support evaluation	Data collected is bad, inaccurate or unreliable, OR collection inhibits program success	Data collected inconsistently; cleaning is required before use	Collects some data on a regular basis that is useful to inform its poverty fighting impact	Tracks all metrics consistently and has awareness of pre-intervention poverty status
Data measurement instruments	Insufficient access to systems and/or information to support evaluation	Lack of visibility of how and where data is collected, which raises questions on its reliability	Insufficient measurement instruments exist to collect needed data	Some measurement instruments to gather needed data from the program and participants	High quality, customized data measurement instruments to collect data
Data storage, security, and analytics	Insufficient access to systems and/or information to support evaluation	Storage does not ensure the integrity of data nor the security of sensitive data	Uses basic tools with limited security to keep data	Uses spreadsheets and/or enterprise data collection software and data management system	Systematically uses efficient and secure data systems and analytics software



Systems-level change is not a main focus for Advance Memphis, but there is limited evidence Advance is influencing its immediate peers

Dimensions	Unclear	Negative	At least neutral	At least strong	Very strong
 Systems-level change	Standard for “positive impact” unclear or disputed by stakeholders	Evidence of negative impact on ecosystem	Limited or no evidence of impact on ecosystem in Memphis	Some evidence of positive impact on ecosystem in Memphis	Evidence of powerful, positive impact on ecosystem in Memphis and/or beyond

Explanation of evidence

- Creating systems-level change is not part of Advance’s specific mission nor does it inform their operations
- There is some evidence Advance Memphis has influenced some change through its peer organizations
- Similar Memphis non-profits sought advice from Advance
- The Work Life curriculum is taught at the Memphis Center for Urban Theological Studies
- Other job training programs are often assessed relative to Advance Memphis

Stand-out strengths

- Advance Memphis’ Work Life curriculum is broadly applicable and used by other organizations

Opportunities for improvement

- Continue to seize opportunities to influence the broader ecosystem where possible

Slingshot's assessment yields three primary recommendations for Advance Memphis

1

Continue to improve data collection and measurement on the progress of enrollees as they make their way through Advance's programs

2

Continue to improve data collection and measurement on graduates' post-program outcomes and labor market activity

3

Seize opportunities to broaden Advance Memphis' influence in the Memphis poverty-fighting ecosystem

Appendix

The **benefit-cost ratio** quantitatively assesses the benefits generated by an organization compared to its costs

Dimensions	Unclear	Negative	At least neutral	At least strong	Very strong
 Benefit-cost ratio	Lack of sufficient research findings in focus area to support confident estimation of benefit	Costs exceed estimated benefits	Benefits and costs similar	Benefits exceed costs	Benefits substantially exceed costs

The Slingshot Universal Algorithm (SUA) is used to determine the benefit-cost ratio

Factors	Description
Beneficiaries impacted	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of beneficiaries Rate at which beneficiaries are impacted by intervention
Dollar value of benefit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Estimated dollar value of the benefit of a partner's programs
Ecosystem discount	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Share of beneficiaries who would still receive the intervention if not from this specific organization Share of intervention that is provided by or dependent on another organization
Adjusted time horizon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The length of time over which benefits are expected to accrue Calculation adjusted for discount rate, inflation, and growth

Using the SUA to select a rating

- The algorithm generates a numerical benefit-cost ratio
- Slingshot translates the numerical benefit-cost ratio into a rating based on the magnitude of the ratio and any extenuating circumstances for the organization (e.g., start-up investing for future benefit)
- Slingshot will explain the applicability of its assumptions and confidence in its estimates