

## Partners for Places Project Lessons Report

**Project Name:** *smART [sustainability + Madison + art]*

- **Year Complete:** 2018
- **Local Government:** City of Madison, WI
- **Local Foundation:** CUNA Mutual Foundation

### **Project Purpose**

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To empower residents of diverse neighborhoods to identify and pursue neighborhood sustainability goals through art and organizing.

### **Key Lessons Learned**

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*Lessons learned about tools and tactics through the project that other sustainability directors could use to advance their work.*

- Community driven work hinges on trust and relationships. These take time to develop and are critical for success. Invest time in being in communities and enhancing relationships.
- Cross collaboration with funders, non-profits, and the city often depends on the non-profit to host events which puts unfair burden on the non-profit. Incentivize foundations and sustainability directors to meet more often and/or support non-profit's work to mobilize partners.
- When working at a grassroots level, language matters - partnerships first - no "serving".
- Jump on emergent opportunities and be flexible to pivot when you learn more about your community. These two highly successful initiatives: "Environmental Groups Working Toward Equity" and "Greater Madison Engaged," happened because of adaptive strategies.

*Lessons for developing a collaborative process between a local government sustainability director and local place-based foundation(s).*

- Similar to community-driven work, building a collaborative relationship between government and foundations takes time.
- Clear and consistent communication makes projects more effective.
- It is critical to understand the stakeholder organization's respective values and how your values overlap and interplay.

### **Additional Information and Resources**

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In addition to the smART program (and as a result of its adaptable strategy), this project also developed opportunities to engage the community around sustainability, including the [Greater Madison Engaged](#) initiative.