



Think Tank, Inc.

2018 Annual Report





Table of Contents

Introduction

Our Essential Practices

Core Services

Financials

Looking Forward

In the thirteen years since our inception, Think Tank has challenged organizations and communities to change the way they think and respond to poverty. We are shifting the culture of helping by equipping organizations to address poverty in ways that promote human dignity and facilitate lasting change. In this report, you will see the impact of our core investments, focusing our attention on action that aims to:

Increase understanding of the lived experience of poverty in America.

Attack social isolation that keeps poverty in place.

Equip organizations and ministries to implement practices that lead to real change.

Focus on inside-out empowerment by design.

Here are a few highlights from 2018:

- Think Tank, local church leaders, and community partners collaborated to launch CarePortal in Dayton, Ohio. CarePortal is an online platform that brings the needs of hurting children and families to local churches, giving them a real-time opportunity to respond. Think Tank's **ACTS training** is provided to participating churches to equip their volunteers with understanding and tools to support families connected through CarePortal.
- In partnership with the Root Cause Coalition, Think Tank developed a **Healthcare Edition of COPE**. This focuses on increasing understanding and strategies to address the social factors (economic stability, education, neighborhoods) that drive health outcomes.
- Think Tank experienced a growing increase in the number of **schools** training their entire staff in the Cost of Poverty Experience. This has not only shifted mindsets, but also led to immediate action in the adoption of new practices within the school to build stronger relationships with children and parents facing poverty.
- Think Tank certified twenty-nine people to facilitate COPE in eight new states, growing our capacity to reach organizations that are positioned to ignite change.

Essential Practices

Culture includes our norms and beliefs, manifested in the way we do things. In America, we have a culture of helping that shapes the way that we respond to poverty. Mauricio Lim Miller, a culture shifting leader, offers us this challenge.

“We have made poverty tolerable when we should be trying to make it more escapable.”

This requires us, as a society, to trust and invest in people experiencing poverty, as lead actors in creating individual and community change.

Think Tank promotes 5 practices based on a framework that trusts, resources and empowers people in poverty to experience transformation and become agents of change in their own communities.

In the following pages, we highlight the stories of four organizations, including state and national networks, that are being equipped to live out these practices for greater impact.



Pursue Holistic Solutions

Create conditions for human flourishing by using approaches that support holistic wellbeing - including economic, physical, spiritual and emotional health.

Listen First

Proactively cultivate a culture of listening in order to support the dreams and goals of communities impacted by poverty. Seek to discover strengths and build upon them.

Work With, Versus To or For

Poverty cannot be resolved through one-way, transactional giving, but through transformative relationships that partners with communities in poverty.

Build Social Capital

The best solutions for sustainable poverty alleviation often start on the inside. Invest in developing leaders within communities in poverty.

Promote Leadership From Within

When relationships within and across economic communities are linked together, they create an economy with tremendous potential for positive change.



Increase understanding of the lived experience of poverty in America.

The Cost of Poverty Experience: Springfield City Schools

A three hour simulation highlighting the daily realities of poverty.

In August of 2018, 1,100 board members, administrators, faculty and staff of the Springfield City Schools gathered together to begin a new school year by participating together in the Cost of Poverty Experience. According to the Ohio Department of Education's District Profile report, over 90% of the district's nearly 8,000 students were considered economically disadvantaged.

The Cost of Poverty Experience aligned with the school district's strategic plan of trauma-informed care and positive behavioral interventions. However, COPE was more than another training or strategic initiative. The unique value of this experience was that it offered both a personal and shared encounter with the complexities of poverty through the lens of parents, students and neighborhoods.



"It's eye-opening to people who don't understand what our kids go through just to come to school every day."

Ashley, Lead Nurse for SCS District

COPE has begun to ignite small actions that have a big influence over time. Every employee in the district was challenged to identify 2-3 kids that they would be a champion for, connecting in a very intentional way with them to listen, pay attention, and provide connections and support. Additionally, various schools within the district implemented new practices by making simple adjustments within their process to both respond to and try to prevent discipline or attendance issues through relationally-based approaches.

- In 2018, Think Tank impacted approximately 1500 K-12 educators, administrators and staff through the Cost of Poverty Experience.
- 40 schools and healthcare organizations hosted training to improve health and education outcomes with children and families in poverty.
- Over 9,000 people across the U.S. increased their understanding of poverty through the Cost of Poverty Experience.



Attacking social isolation that keeps poverty in place.

The Exchange: Communities of Transformation; Alabama Conference, UMC

Providing practical tools, relevant content and connections.

The mission of Communities of Transformation (COT) is to move families from surviving to thriving by developing personal leadership skills and building authentic relationships. COT is active in ten communities throughout Alabama. This initiative is grounded in a partnership between the United Methodist Church, local community organizations and community members that come together regularly to form friendship, holistically care for one another, grow together and work together on community issues that keep poverty in place.

Think Tank has helped COT grow their impact through our Exchange network. We've helped equip COT with curriculum, coaching on the five essential practices for poverty alleviation and a survey tool for tracking their data and progress. Here is a short testimony on the impact of COT:

Many initiatives address the symptoms that result from living without enough resources, but they don't address the root causes. Communities of Transformation seems to me to be one of the most effective ways to address the root issues. This has a ripple effect through the whole community.



"Many people feel that they are living a sad life. A life full of dead ends and self-doubt. The feelings of emptiness and depression can be very heavy and a burden for many to carry. A community can be such a powerful tool in these times. Communities of Transformation provided skills and services, including hope, to help me take the steps needed for positive change and transformation in my life. Since joining the COT Family, I have seen my life change in so many ways. I have a wonderful career with Publix, and I have a college education and live on a budget. If you would have asked me five years ago, I wouldn't have believed I would be where I am today."

Think Tank currently hosts **90 members** across **27 organizations**.



Equipping organizations and ministries to implement practices that lead to real change.

Abundant Communities (ACTS): CarePortal; Active in 18 States

Resources for churches and faith-based ministries.

Engaging children and families in the midst of crisis is both a great honor and a great challenge. Every day, children and families in every community experience in crisis. What would their lives look like if, instead of need, there was more than enough adoptive families for waiting children, foster families to stand in the gap and wrap around support for families on the brink?

In 2017, Think Tank was introduced to the Global Orphan Project, and their signature domestic ministry, CarePortal. CarePortal connects children and families affected by the child welfare system to churches, businesses and individuals who want to help.

While CarePortal had developed an amazing technology platform to connect families with supportive resources to meet needs in real time, the challenge was moving from crisis mitigation to deeper level change. Think Tank began supporting CarePortal by providing ACTS training resources, strategic consultation and coaching of internal facilitators to equip churches in their region with tools to better understand and address issues that fuel poverty and family separation. Think Tank also partnered with a team of churches and nonprofits to bring CarePortal to Dayton, Ohio in November of 2018. Looking ahead, Think Tank is committed to working collaboratively with the Global Orphan Project to foster relationships between community schools and urban and suburban churches to cross difficult divides for the sake of children.



*In 2018, Careportal worked with 20 implementing partners across **18 states** to build relationships with **1,800 churches**, impacting the lives of **14,877 children**.*



Focus on inside-out empowerment by design.

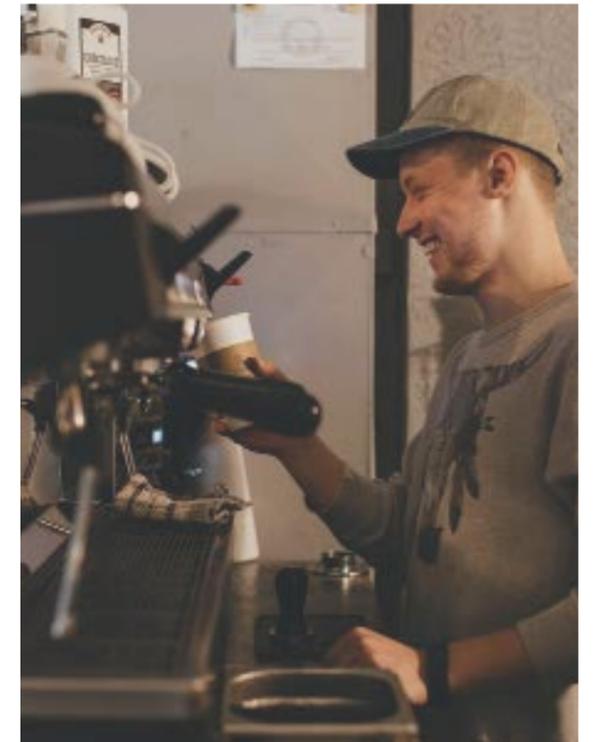
Americorps VISTA: Coffee Crafters, Columbus, Ohio

Building human capital to help non-profits have greater impact.

Coffee Crafters Academy exists to partner with individuals in their transition out of incarceration with job training, transitional employment and housing assistance. Their program participants learn the Barista trade through staff cafes located inside of local correctional facilities. Graduates are then supported, upon release, with job placement services and housing assistance.

Think Tank worked with innovative non-profits, such as Coffee Crafters to place Volunteers In Service To America (VISTA's). VISTA helps build capacity of organizations to achieve their mission.

Coffee Crafters has hosted 3 Americorps Volunteers in Service to America over the past 3 years. Tim began serving as a VISTA in 2018. His primary responsibilities included expanding partnerships with Third Way Café and leading pilot operations at café inside of London Correctional Institution. Through these projects he has increased the program's financial sustainability and helped Coffee Crafters grow their brand through community events and social media outreach.



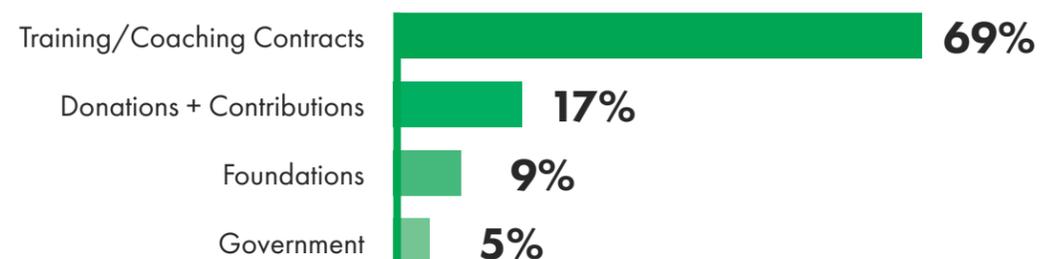
*26 people dedicated **54,080 hours of service** to fight poverty across Ohio through Think Tank's Americorps VISTA Project.*

***\$1,335,235:** Value of volunteer hours leveraged through Think Tank's Americorps VISTA project.*

Financials

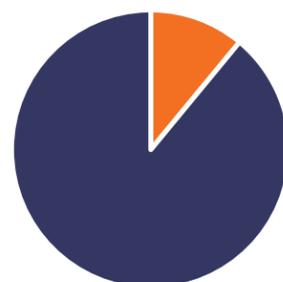
Revenue

\$591,944



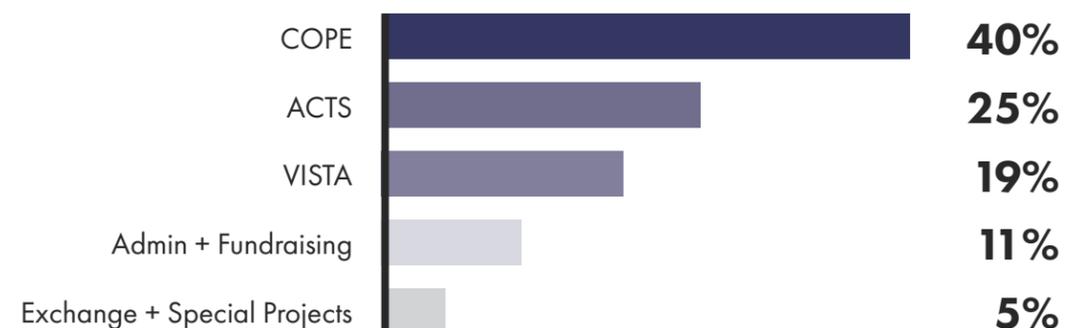
Expenses

\$582,391



89% Program

11% Admin + Fundraising



A Special Thank You

Think Tank's mission is shared through the investment of countless individuals that bring value, passion, insight and experience to this work. We would like to acknowledge and give special thanks to our partners, board, and staff.



Think Tank Staff & VISTAS

- Marlo Fox
- John White
- Heather Cunningham
- Pam Ku Snyder
- Jeremy McCloud
- Andrea Harper
- Jay Weygandt
- Lori Simms-Parks

Strategic Partners

- ACTS Donors
- Answer Poverty
- CareSource Foundation
- Chalmers Center
- Communities of Transformation
- Corporation for National & Community Service
- Fairhaven Church
- Global Orphan Project/ CarePortal

Board of Directors

- Carleen Suttman
- Ron Eubel
- Rachel Graves
- David Smith
- Deb Hunt
- John Cloud
- Christine Sapita





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