



# Southeast Michigan Community Impact Cohort

**Year 1 Annual Report**

September 2025



*Powered by Ballmer Group, the Payne Family Foundation & UpMetrics*

## Executive Letter from Drew Payne

Year one of the Southeast Michigan Community Impact Cohort has been about building the foundation for something bigger. Together with Ballmer Group and twenty-eight remarkable nonprofit organizations, we've spent the past year laying the groundwork for a more connected and collaborative social sector in Southeast Michigan.

Organizations have built their **Impact Frameworks** - the guiding maps that clarify what they're working toward and how they'll measure progress. They've also leaned into **peer learning and collaboration**, breaking down silos and forging new connections across the region. And they've begun to **strengthen their impact storytelling**, finding new ways to express the value of their work to funders, boards, and communities.

This may look like early-stage work, but it's the kind of foundation that enables lasting transformation. By investing in clarity, collaboration, and shared learning now, these organizations are setting themselves up for deeper data collection, richer insights, and stronger community outcomes in the years ahead.

On behalf of the entire UpMetrics team, I'd like to thank **Kylee Mitchell Wells, Jessica Eiland Anders, Angee Sanders, Rinia Shelby-Combs, Kevin Bromer and Kayla Roney Smith** from the Ballmer team for their partnership and trust. Building these relationships has been a highlight of our work this year - strengthening the foundation for what this cohort can achieve together. I'm proud of what we've accomplished so far and am excited to continue watching this community grow, learn, and drive lasting change across Southeast Michigan.

With gratitude,



**Drew Payne**

Chief Executive Officer, UpMetrics

## Southeast Michigan Community Impact Cohort Members





## Cohort Overview

The Southeast Michigan Community Impact Cohort is a three-year program designed to equip participating organizations with the tools, capacity and confidence to use data for learning and storytelling to accelerate impact at scale.

## Grounding Our Work in Shared Goals



### Capacity Building

Nonprofits learn practical, data-driven skills and strategies to leverage information to inform their work.



### Community Connection

Nonprofits learn from each other, share ideas, and build relationships with peers and funders.



### Impact Storytelling

Nonprofits learn to tell data-backed stories about their work that resonate with funders and the people they serve.

### Year 1

**In Year 1, the cohort focused on developing foundational skills and core impact measurement assets.** Participants defined and created custom impact frameworks - serving as an essential tool for strategy and storytelling. From there, UpMetrics partnered with each organization to build their first audience-specific dashboard and Public Impact Profile.

### Year 2

**In the coming year, participants will deepen their impact measurement skills and strengthen their data practices.** The focus will shift to building additional audience dashboards and advancing efforts around community contribution and community-level data.

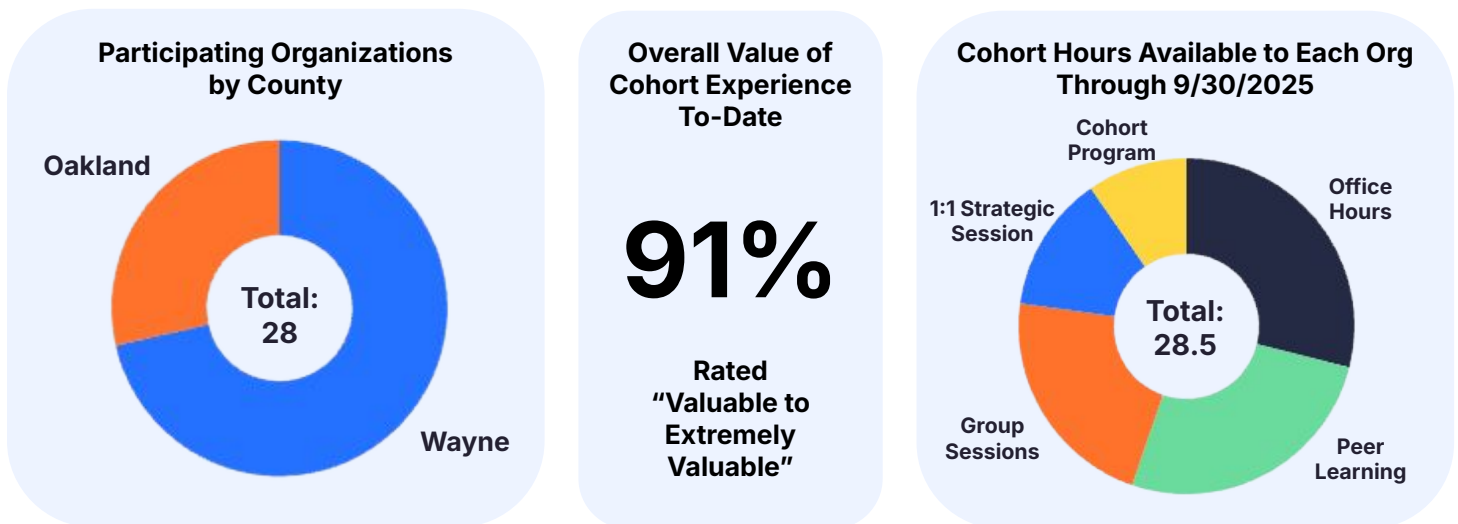
### Year 3

**The final year will center on further empowering participants through the adoption of sustainable data practices.** Organizations will apply their learning more broadly across teams, embedding impact measurement into daily operations and leveraging it to drive long-term success.

## Measuring Our Momentum: A Data-Driven Snapshot

Building on a strong start, the SE Michigan Community Impact Cohort has advanced from foundational learning into active participation and collaboration. Along the way, we've tracked progress not just through deliverables, but also through how cohort members are engaging in the program - completing key milestones, attending sessions, and contributing to the cohort community.

The interactive dashboard below highlights these measures of momentum, offering a data-driven view of cohort delivery, engagement, and participation to date.



[View the SE Michigan Community Impact Cohort Dashboard](#)

## In Their Words: Why this Cohort Matters

"If I could share one thing with funders, it's this: programs like this help us **quantify what's often unquantifiable**. They give us the tools to translate the everyday impact we're having on young people into language and data that can resonate with different audiences.

By creating spaces for ongoing insight, reflection, and connection, it's helping us improve, grow, and ultimately deliver stronger outcomes for our community."

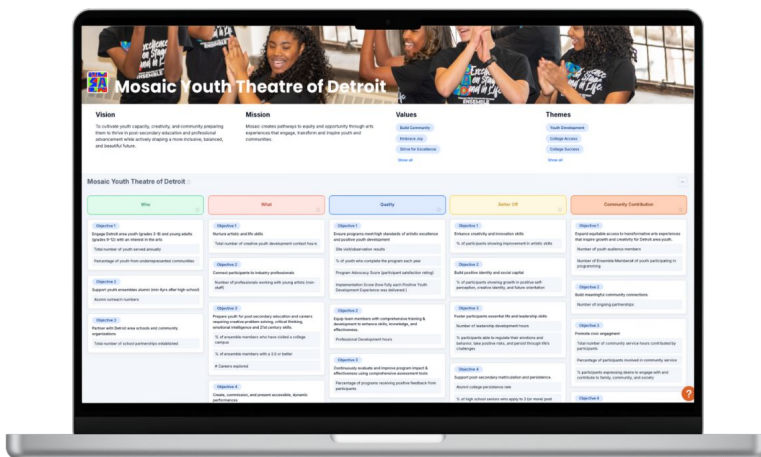
- Edmund Alyn Jones, Mosaic Youth Theatre of Detroit



## Cohort Participant Impact Frameworks

**An Impact Framework is a blueprint for measuring and communicating an organization's impact.** It helps impact organizations define what they do, who they serve, and why it matters - along with the metrics they'll track to measure progress. With this clarity, organizations can confidently assess results, share outcomes, and continuously strengthen their work over time.

Through online training sessions and our full-day in-person event, cohort members developed their impact frameworks, received constructive feedback from peers and UpMetrics staff, and discovered new ways to measure and communicate their impact.



## Example Frameworks

- [Mosaic Youth Theatre of Detroit](#)
- [Center for Success Network](#)
- [Brilliant Detroit](#)

## In Their Words: Value of Impact Frameworks & Data

In this video, Cohort Champions share early insights on the value of the cohort and being supported in building an Impact Framework. Their reflections highlight why this work matters and how they plan to use their framework and the data they collect to strengthen their storytelling and demonstrate impact with greater clarity and confidence.



## Cohort Highlight: In-Person Learning Event & Framework Showcase

In April, leaders from the participating organizations gathered in Detroit to do what changemakers do best: show up, speak truth, and lean into community. The day was about radical clarity, honest reflection, and collaborative learning. It was designed to build momentum and move us forward in a time when progress can feel harder than ever.

### Impact Framework Breakouts: Building with Purpose

Participants broke into small groups by impact theme to workshop their Impact Frameworks and reflect on one another's progress. By the end, they left with refined frameworks and fresh insight into how peers across the region are defining and measuring impact.



### The Elephant in the Room: Political Headwinds, Shared Resilience

In the afternoon, we created space to discuss how today's political climate affects mission-driven work. Leaders named challenges like funding insecurity, shifting regulations, rising community needs, and burnout - then explored what it means to lead with resilience under pressure.



### Funder Immersion & Panel: Bridging Conversations

Local funders joined to review frameworks and engage directly with nonprofit leaders. A panel of sector voices reflected on how impact frameworks spark alignment and how the cohort model helps shift funder-grantee dynamics toward trust and shared learning.

### Closing with Celebration

The day concluded with an engaging mixer, bringing together the funders and nonprofit organizations already in attendance, additional members from their teams, and other social impact professionals from across Southeast Michigan. It was a celebration of progress, possibility, and people coming together to advance the work in smarter, stronger, and more connected ways.



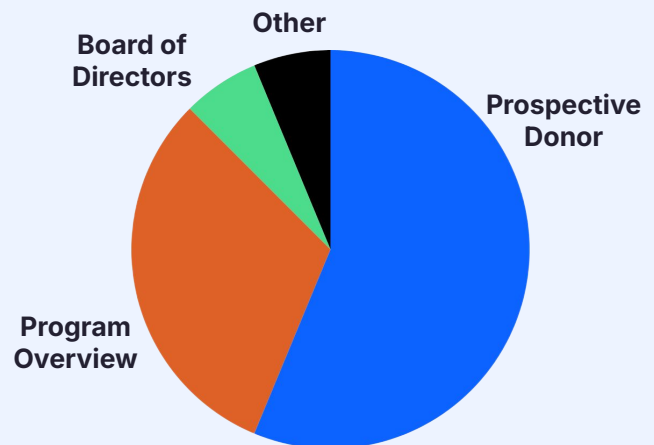
## The Next Chapter: Driving Growth, Guidance, and Deeper Connection

Building on the foundational work to-date, cohort members are now moving into the next phase of growth and support. With an increased focus on one-on-one guidance, they are beginning to build audience-specific dashboards that will empower them to explore their data more deeply.

This milestone marks a shift from *defining impact* to building tools that *make it visible*, and will accelerate their ability to tell compelling, data-driven stories of impact as we close out the first year and look ahead to what's next.



**Primary Audience for First Dashboard**



### Feature Spotlight: Advanced Analytics

Cohort participants will be among the first to use our newest feature, **Advanced Analytics** - offering more flexible dashboard tools like cross-filtering, collaborative editing, and presentation-ready visualizations.

This means less time spent *managing* data, and more time spent using data to make mission-aligned decisions and sharing clearer, more compelling stories of impact.

### Upcoming Peer Learning Sessions

The next peer learning session is scheduled for October 2025 and will focus on **Resource Sharing & Operational Collaboration**. The session will highlight real-life examples and ideas for sharing tools, staff, services, and infrastructure across nonprofits - helping participants identify opportunities to pilot shared services or referrals across the cohort.





## **Southeast Michigan Community Impact Cohort**

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A special thank you to Ballmer Group and their Southeast Michigan team for trusting us to support their impact measurement work and for investing in vital community programs across Michigan, as well as the UpMetrics team for their dedication, expertise, and passion in guiding the cohort every step of the way.

