



Firm Overview

fdcPartnerships

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Who We Are and What We Do

Established in 2002, jdcPartnerships is a minority woman-owned consulting firm located in the San Francisco Bay Area. We partner with our clients to build their adaptive, strategic and leadership capacity. Depending on the client's situation, this may encompass assessment and evaluation, strategy formation and strategic planning, and/or leadership development. In addition, we provide training and technical assistance to support clients in building their capacity as evaluative learning organizations, and we give presentations and lead workshops to share our learnings more broadly.

Our Work

Our work spans three interrelated areas that are often viewed as separate “services”:

- Assessment and evaluation
- Strategy formation and strategic planning
- Leadership development

In reality, these overlap in their objectives and outcomes (strengthened capacity), and naturally support and reinforce each other. Most of our projects integrate these three areas, although often one or two of them may be the focus of the work.

Our Clients

Our clients are social, philanthropic and public sector organizations that create positive social change. They are mission-driven organizations that work with and on behalf of marginalized communities to address issues of disproportionate access to resources and opportunities, health disparities and social injustice. Through their work, they improve quality of life for all by addressing the overarching systems and underlying causes that create inequities. They do this work in a variety of fields including:

- Public health
- Maternal and child health
- Early childhood development
- Youth development
- Education
- Human and social services
- Philanthropy
- Environment

In addition to these areas of content expertise, jdcPartnerships has significant experience and a deep body of knowledge and practice in the area of system change and emerging practice in the areas of structural change and movement building. We work with clients to identify and define opportunities for changing the systems in which they work to support increased and sustained organizational impact. This often leads to building a more adaptive system (one that engages in on-going system change), which is one that continuously “reinvents” itself in order to remain relevant and effective in a dynamic environment.

Our work in systems change has involved extensive work in conducting evaluations and strategic efforts with clusters of grantees that are focused on a common objective. Among these clients are several First 5 programs, each of which involve the systems of child development and education programs and agencies serving entire counties in California. In addition, we often provide technical assistance to clusters of grantees; an example of this is our work with grantees of the Latino Community Foundation in logic modeling. We frequently conduct workshops on evaluation for clusters of leaders in similar roles, such as sessions for executive directors and for organizations focused on the same field, such as transitional age youth (TAY).

Among our past and current clients are The California Wellness Foundation, CompassPoint Nonprofit Services, the Latino Community Foundation, several First 5 Children and Families

Commissions, RYSE Center for Youth, Sacred Heart Community Service and Oakland Department of Human Services. (For a complete list, please visit our website: www.jdcpartnerships.com)

Our Approach

When an organization engages in this work, it's usually "in addition to" – not "instead of" – their day-to-day work. We understand this reality and create a collaborative process that integrates into the client's ongoing work. We design the process so that clients internalize it and make it their own. So, even though our engagement ends, the client's learning and development process doesn't.

We function as learning partner and co-creator, and as learning coach or mentor. We engage clients in a dialogue to create a structure, process and tools for capturing and using information to support decision-making.

This starts with an assessment of the client's situation and stage of organizational development. This facilitates self-reflection about the challenges and issues facing the organization and its leadership. We create a safe space where clients can surface and explore assumptions, and together we set realistic objectives.

Next, we collaborate on a plan for achieving these objectives. This integrates the process of evaluative inquiry (EI) and adapts it to each client's situation. The process may incorporate theory of change, theory of action and logic modeling tools, and is customized to the client organization's stage of development.

An overarching objective is to support clients in strengthening their ability to think and act strategically, and to adapt to ongoing change. In essence, we partner with clients to build their capacity and begin where they are.

Our values and philosophy guide our work.

Our Values

Our values or beliefs are the foundation of our approach to our work. We believe that:

- *Our clients engage in important work of creating positive social change; our role is to contribute to their continued success.*
- *Our clients are our partners in our work together.*
- *A healthy and strong organization is one that values its staff and partners.*
- *Values, assumptions and decision-making processes must be clearly articulated to team members.*
- *Transparency supports meaningful communication; it builds collaboration and momentum in support of the mission.*

Our Philosophy

The following principles frame our approach to our work:

- *Organizational context and practice shape the process and must be considered if meaningful inquiry, assessment, reflection and decision-making are to occur.*
- *Organizational learning is based on the intentional use of information to inform strategy, decisions and practices.*
- *Evaluative inquiry is a process and tool for informing and strengthening decisions, enhancing learning and increasing effectiveness.*
- *It is essential to be reality-based and to consider current and future capacity and resources.*

Our Consulting Team

Over the years, the firm has grown steadily and intentionally. Our consultants have a diversity of complementary skills, knowledge and experience, allowing us to compose teams that best meet the requirements of each project. When a project requires an area of expertise that falls outside our core competencies, or if we need to supplement our team, we draw on our network of strategic partners. All team members are trained in our approach and all, along with our partners, share jdcPartnerships' values and philosophy.

■ **Jara Dean-Coffey, MPH** *Founder & Principal*

For more than 15 years Jara has designed and implemented processes and tools that integrate strategic thinking with evaluative inquiry to support organizations in building their adaptive capacity and enhancing their mission-related impact. Her clients include social, philanthropic and public sector organizations of all sizes – from ones with annual budgets of \$250,000 upward to those with revenues of \$1 billion.

Throughout her career, Jara has worked with the leadership of public agencies, foundations and social sector organizations as well as with elected and appointed officials to navigate the territory of information, impact and decision-making. In her roles as advisor, consultant and team leader, Jara focuses on the importance of strengthening the infrastructure of her clients' organizations so that their missions remain the guiding framework for decision-making. She also brings an understanding of the nuances, politics and human dynamics that influence decision-making. She creates a safe environment for her clients to acknowledge and explore their reality.

Jara is a frequent workshop leader and conference presenter on topics ranging from logic modeling to theories of change to stages of organizational change to system change. She leads experiential learning sessions on these and other topics for clusters of grantees, as well as for groups composed of leaders of social sector and philanthropic organizations.

Jara holds a Master of Public Health degree

from the University of California, Berkeley; a BA in Communications and Political Science from Temple University; and a certificate in Organizational Development and Evaluation from Fielding Graduate University. She also serves on the Board of a supporting organization of the Marin Community Foundation, where she has chaired the Program Committee and currently sits on the Executive Committee as the Secretary.

■ **Jill Casey, BS** *Associate Consultant*

Jill leads jdcPartnerships' work in research design and analysis, and program modeling. With more than ten years experience in the field of evaluation in the public and social sectors, Jill has deep expertise in all aspects of evaluation and in using information to inform strategic decision-making.

Jill is currently engaged in a major project to synthesize research regarding the use of logic models and other graphic conceptual models for broader publication and dissemination to inform practice. This research involved facilitation of a symposium with leading evaluation scholars and practitioners on the role of culture in the use of logic models.

In addition to co-authoring several publications in the field of evaluation, Jill frequently presents on these topics at national and regional conferences. She has co-designed and facilitated professional development workshops for the American Evaluation Association (AEA).

Jill is highly skilled in instrument design and implementation – including focus group discussion guides and moderation, phone and

in-person interview protocols and questionnaires, and mail, electronic and paper survey instruments. In analyzing survey and other quantitative data, Jill draws on her significant experience in data collection, analysis, and reporting, and her in-depth experience in the field of education, including adult education and curriculum development.

Prior to joining jdcPartnerships, Jill held Research Assistant and then Research Associate positions with Torres Consulting Group and Developmental Studies Center.

Jill received a B.S. degree in Political Science from Arizona State University.

■ **Nicole Farkouh, MPP, MEd**

Research Associate

Nicole has a wealth of skills and experience including qualitative and quantitative research and analysis expertise, as well as excellent writing and communications skills.

For a large portion of her professional career Nicole has been involved in work with a variety of international organizations, several of which have been based in Nepal. In these positions, Nicole combined her research skills with her strengths as an advocate, a collaboration facilitator, an organizational consultant and a communicator to support these organizations in developing their capacity related to collaboration, community development and strategic planning.

Prior to embarking on this international work, Nicole served in leadership positions in elementary school and middle school education programs.

Nicole received a Master of Public Policy degree from UC Berkeley, a Master of Education degree (with a concentration in special education) from the University of New Orleans, and a BA in Cultural Anthropology. She is a published author, writing about a variety of topics ranging from women's rights in relation to health care to her travels, and a frequent conference presenter.

■ **Paulina M Flores, MEd**

Research Associate

Paulina's focus in her work with jdcPartnerships is in the areas of qualitative and secondary research. She has strong experience in the social and public sectors in the areas of education and administration, interventions for children with special needs, youth development and higher education.

Paulina has held positions ranging from Assistant Principal to Program Manager and has deep knowledge and skills in the areas of program design, planning and both quantitative and qualitative research. She has experience in both the K-12 educational system and in higher education. Drawing on this knowledge, skills and experience, Paulina collaborated in the creation and implementation of strategies that were successful in promoting more effective teacher training, improving student learning results and expanding programs to increase their impact.

Through her various professional roles, Paulina has developed a keen sense of how to design and analyze research questions, conduct program planning and implementation, and design training and technical assistance opportunities consistent with an organization's culture and mission. Bilingual, Paulina is able to apply this skill set in both English and Spanish, and is adept at simultaneous translation of focus and discussion groups.

Paulina holds a Master of Education degree from Harvard University and a BA in Government and Latin American Studies from Wesleyan University.

■ **Minoo Safai-Amini, PhD**

Senior Data Advisor

Minoo draws on her in-depth knowledge of complex statistical analysis methods and of approaches to community development in underserved communities in support of jdcPartnerships' projects. An urban and regional planner by training, Minoo has broad teaching and research experience in the areas of planning and community development, survey research and statistical analysis. A key area

in which her research has focused is in applying a multidisciplinary perspective to explore smart growth and urban redevelopment models and their impact on underserved communities. Through this work, Minoo has cultivated a deep understanding of community-level system and structural issues, and of approaches to addressing these. Over the years, Minoo has conducted a variety of research projects related to urban planning and community development, and has published and presented on these topics.

Most recently, Minoo has worked as an independent consultant to a variety of nonprofit organizations including community-based organizations, school districts, local government agencies and faith-based institutions.

For much of the past decade, Minoo was a Research Associate and Policy Analyst at the State University of New York (SUNY) at Buffalo. In this

role, which spanned an eight-year period, Minoo worked extensively on community development projects and gained deep experience working with numerous funding agencies including NYDEC, HUD, NIH, the Department of Education, EPA and many foundations. Prior to her work at SUNY, Minoo was a professor at several universities where she taught a variety of subjects including urban community planning, economics and management information systems.

Minoo received her PhD in Urban and Economic Planning from Michigan State University, her MUP (Masters in Urban Planning) from the University of Michigan and a BA degree in Sociology from the National University of Iran.

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