

Conquering the Poverty Cycle

How Nonprofits and Government Agencies
Collaborated to Help Kansas City Children and Families

Executive Summary

Data is crucial to telling your organization's success story. A lack of data infrastructure makes telling that story difficult, expensive, and time-consuming. With a proper platform, organizations can spend less time tracking and reporting, and more time meeting the needs of the community.

For LINC, a Kansas City-based organization, finding a way to share and consolidate data with other organizations and government agencies would be the key to serving the community with significantly greater results. And with new efficiencies came more streamlined processes and reporting for all stakeholders—the community, participating organizations, and funders. A “win” all around.

Serving the social impact sector since 2000, Social Solutions provides tools to improve the lives of the people our clients serve, to help the workers who dedicate their lives to delivering these services and for the funders who make the work possible. © 2021

Introduction

The Power Of Data Consolidation Among Groups

Sometimes, the most vulnerable populations fall through the cracks—cracks created by bureaucratic obstacles like filling out multiple forms among various government agencies and nonprofits. Information gets lost, data isn't tracked efficiently and needs remain unmet.

A lack of data infrastructure among multiple organizations in one city can lead to thousands of extra hours of administrative work that wastes

valuable time that could be used to focus on helping communities. Everyone wants a clear view of the needs of the people. But without a bird's eye view—one that can only be attained through sharing data and

resources—those who want to help are stuck on the ground.

But merely gathering data presents its own unique set of challenges. Too much of it, or data that is not strategically aligned to community and organization goals, can re-create the original problem: it just takes too long to sort through the data and make the urgent decisions an organization needs to remain valuable, vital and productive.

Additionally, data is a crucial part of telling your organization's story and proving outcomes. Stakeholders and service recipients alike demand transparency and evidence that programs positively impact both individuals and communities.

When you have tools to integrate data from various sources, you can uncover new insights and measure your efforts' real outcomes. That's what happened to one ambitious community organization in Kansas City when they decided to partner with area public schools to solve urgent problems in their community.

Data is a crucial part of telling your organization's story and proving outcomes.





Kansas City, Missouri

Meet LINC

The Challenge

In 1992, Kansas City had one of the highest poverty rates in the U.S. affecting one of the largest metro populations of children and youth. State and county governments, nonprofit organizations and businesses were desperate to identify specific community needs to fight poverty, dismantle income inequality and create more opportunities for its citizens. Everyone had ideas about how to serve the community. With organizations and agencies doing their own work and data collection, they struggled to establish a clear and unified vision of the programs that could produce positive outcomes.

But Kansas City business leader Bert Berkley had an idea. What if all of these organizations could come together to form a citizen commission designed with one clear purpose: work together to create and implement programs to promote community improvement and engagement. And that's precisely what happened. They called themselves the Local Investment Commission (LINC).

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Nonprofits, schools and government agencies needed to collaborate and coordinate their efforts.



LINC: Citizen-Driven Collaborative

LINC began its work by listening to the community and figuring out how services could be better organized or delivered differently to support children and families. So, the state of Missouri created a state-designated community partnership to improve outcomes with more opportunity and flexibility.

The first two or three years were challenging for LINC leaders who had to deal with the challenge of delivering on the mission they had laid out.

LINC's first project was their welfare-to-work system, which was praised by President Bill Clinton. They were off to a good start. Now, they needed to get even clearer about who they were going to serve next. That's when real data started to come in. LINC started tracking necessary demographic information and quickly learned that most of the people they served were low-income families with children. This vital piece of data made their next move crystal clear.

LINC needed to work directly with schools. Schools were already providing some social and educational services, while nonprofits and other organizations provided a slate of different services for children and families. Nonprofits, schools and government agencies needed to collaborate and coordinate their efforts so no one receiving services would fall through the cracks.



Taking Action

Inspired by the “community school model” implemented by other school districts, nonprofits and community-based organizations across the country, LINC created Caring Communities in partnership with several area school districts. The Caring Communities initiative provides places where community members can regularly gather to receive health and social services such as before- and after-school childcare, tutoring and job skills training. The initiative improves student learning, supports families and builds strong communities—vital ingredients for helping to lift people out of poverty and into brighter, more equitable futures.

The Solution

Caring Communities would serve 6,000 students at 50 different schools in seven school districts in Kansas City. They had a big job ahead. In its first few years, LINC’s Caring Community initiative faced enormous organizational challenges. But that changed in 2015. That’s when LINC began using [Apricot 360®](#) by Social Solutions, which allowed them to save time and resources. This tool combines best-in-class case management features with robust data science and advanced analytics.

Apricot 360 Software for Education

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socialsolutions.com/solutions-apricot-products/

The Era Of Integrated Data

Now the era of integrated data would bring LINC’s ability to achieve its mission to a whole new level. LINC was particularly interested in using integrated data to:



Gain a deeper understanding of the students in the after-school program



Prove that after-school program participants earn higher grades than non-participants



Demonstrate that after-school programs help improve school attendance, which is an essential factor in improving academic performance



The after-school program enrollment process was a laborious 6-week process for LINC team members in previous years. They took thousands of handwritten forms and entered the data into the organization's Apricot data management system, powered by Social Solutions. If we consider a three-page enrollment form for 6,000 students, that's 18,000 pieces of paper to collect and process over a few weeks. It was a daunting task for LINC and time-strapped families alike.

Then, just in time for the 2019-2020 school year, LINC implemented a key process improvement. Electronic forms would allow parents and caregivers to pre-enroll their children by entering information directly into LINC's updated Apricot system. LINC's web-based form asks parents to submit information about the child and family, including emergency contacts and health considerations, along with signatures.

The Outcome

Apricot 360 improved LINC's processes. The platform saved them valuable time and money that could then be used to help the community. Results included:

- The staff no longer had to enter the data manually. As a result, LINC staff saved the equivalent of 85 days' or 17 weeks' worth of time.⁰¹
- This improvement meant that staff could focus more on meeting families while organizing and optimizing programs for the upcoming year.
- An increased pre-enrollment email open rate from 49-56%
- Clients like LINC Kansas City report that their program participants are more likely to attend school, get better grades and graduate from high school than their peers.

⁰¹ *How One Intake Form saved LINC 85 days' Worth of Time*
socialsolutions.com/blog/how-one-intake-form-saved-linc-85-days-worth-of-time/



“**I was stunned.** We sent an email around July when we typically don’t have as ready access to parents and had a **49% open rate**, which is very high. As soon as we sent that first email, people were acting on it immediately. Then, we sent a follow-up in early August, and we saw a **56% open rate.**”

The immediate response to the pre-enrollment intake form was extraordinary.”

Brent Schondelmeyer
Deputy Director of Community Engagement — LINC



Image by LINC

Family graduation for a parent engagement program

When LINC announced the availability of the after-school program pre-enrollment intake form—easily accessed via a mobile device or PC and available in English and Spanish—the response from parents was overwhelming.

The rapid uptake was proof that LINC had implemented a significant improvement in the enrollment process that parents welcomed. “To me, the success of the new pre-enrollment form showed that there was pent-up demand for an online option,” Brent Schondelmeyer said.

LINC’s web-based after-school program pre-enrollment form has achieved for parents and adults two-fold: greater convenience of enrolling children in programs and greater peace of mind knowing that children are set up for the school year ahead of time.



Up Next: After-School Best Practices



Image by LINC — LINC Chess Girls Tournament at Fire Prairie Elementary, Fort Osage School District. 2019.

Measuring Impact At A Community Level

According to America After 3 p.m. Special Report: Afterschool in Communities of Concentrated Poverty,⁰² “Research has found that when children from low-income families take part in quality after-school programs, they see positive gains. Consistent participation in high-quality after-school programs has been shown to help students improve their work habits and demonstrate higher persistence levels and help to close the achievement gap between children from low-income families and their more affluent peers. It was also found that the positive impact of after-school programs on children matches that of early childhood programs—from academics to social and behavioral outcomes.”

Again, LINC Kansas City reports that their program participants are more likely than their classmates to experience greater overall success throughout high school including regularly attending school, achieving higher grades and graduating.

Because family socioeconomic status may be a critical factor in a child’s attitude toward school, classroom conduct, absenteeism and motivation, LINC needed to expand its analysis to better evaluate the contribution of its after-school programs in the superior performance seen for participating students.

For years, researchers have studied the relationship between educational achievement and socioeconomic backgrounds. Studies use factors like parental education, occupation and income, and parental expectations to compare results. LINC wanted to replicate this type of multi-factor data analysis to understand the elements contributing to students’ success. And while the data available in Apricot 360 doesn’t include information about parental education and occupation, student residence zip codes from school data combined with Census data help education-focused organizations better understand performance drivers.

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⁰². *Afterschool in Communities of Concentrated Poverty*
afterschoolalliance.org/aa3pm/concentrated_poverty.pdf



Access to useful, targeted data means understanding what's happening at every site in real-time.



Representation Matters. Image by LINC

A student at Wendell Phillips Elementary at Attucks shows off new library books donated in part by LINC.

Access to useful, targeted data means understanding what's happening at every Caring Community site in real-time. Greater visibility into the work each LINC site is doing has become a crucial part of the organization's ongoing strategies and conversations with the media and community. LINC can now report much more efficiently to stakeholders—by showing outcomes more accurately they reinforce their value.

LINC's next major project has a clearly defined goal of reducing the number of days children miss school when they transfer school districts. LINC will use the robustness of Apricot 360 to support the provision and coordination of services that aid in the smooth transition between schools for children. And they will use data to monitor how successfully they are reducing the number of school days children miss.

For organizations across the nonprofit and public sectors who want to make a difference in a complex space like education, having access to multiple data sources is critical. Combining school data, Census data and other data points, along with the analysis and reporting power within Apricot 360, has proven to be a solid foundation for decision-making that drives improved student outcomes. Today, unprecedented insights into services delivered throughout the community have gone into supporting effective collaboration.



Up Next: Outcomes-Focused Technology



Modern Approach

Case management software brings organizations together to serve the greater good.

Organizations need to make data-driven decisions to maximize resources and have more significant impacts on the communities they serve. Social Solutions' Apricot 360 case management technology was built to advance human service organizations' approach to data and reporting while enhancing productivity and supporting the realization of outcomes.

Apricot 360 harnesses the power of large collections of aggregated data to help organizations gain better insights into not only entire programs but also individual progress. This means that a person's information no longer needs to be siloed and can be securely shared.

**Apricot 360:
outcomes-focused
modern case
management software**

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Try a demo of Apricot 360
socialsolutions.com/request-a-demo/



Capabilities That Drive Results

Here are features that LINC used to work with public schools in Kansas City to deliver excellent results for students and their families:

AGGREGATE REPORT BUILDING

Get the big-picture view of a campaign's efficacy by combining many reports' metrics. The more data you have, the better your decisions will fit the needs of your community.

APRICOT CONNECT

Increase client engagement and ownership of their progress within your programs with mobile forms that allow your participants to self-serve.

APRICOT INSIGHTS

Consisting of the Insights Dashboard and Results Reports, Apricot leverages state-of-the-art advanced analytics and data visualization to help you better understand trends and make informed decisions.

CENSUS DATA INTEGRATION

Gain a 360-degree view of the communities you serve with the ability to integrate demographic data on State, County, City or ZIP code levels.

CLEAN, INTUITIVE USER INTERFACE

Streamline employee adoption with simple workflows. Implementing powerful software can be time-consuming, but intuitive workflows lead to managing outcomes faster.

DATA INTEGRATIONS

Drastically reduce your time spent entering data into separate systems.

MULTIPLE PROGRAM SITES

Synchronize and manage many programs and organization locations from the same platform. Sharing and comparing data across multiple locations and programs to determine where dollars can most effectively be spent is simpler than ever.

POWERFUL INTAKE CAPABILITIES

It's never been easier to reach and empower participants in your community with custom Intake forms. Give your employees and volunteers more time to further your mission while spending less time on paperwork.

PREMIER SUPPORT PACKAGE

Get top-notch support from our Support team. This partnership will turn your administrators into elite outcomes managers in no time.



Synthesis

For LINC, Apricot serves as a connector of a complex ecosystem that tracks participation for individuals being served by:

This complex web of information is available on one common dashboard.

- Before and After-Care Programs
- Summer Food Programs
- Homeless Services
- Community Events
- School Services
- Welfare to Work
- Training

... and much more. Organizations can track grants, contracts, partner organization activities, human resources and more. This complex web of information is available on one common dashboard for every participant to see and use.

Apricot 360 is a platform that revolutionizes how multiple organizations—nonprofits and government agencies alike—plan services and programs. It tracks data in real-time to empower organizations to make high-impact decisions that can profoundly improve the lives of people in the community. With a single vision that spans the full scope of services and support programs each participant receives, organizations can work together like never before to make sure no one falls through the cracks.

Learn how Apricot 360 can bring nonprofits and government agencies together to improve community outcomes.



"We have to talk about these things." Image by Jamie Braden, [LINC](#)

Children from LINC's summer program at Wendell Phillips Elementary School study the Kehinde Wiley painting, "Triple Portrait of Charles I," at the Nelson-Atkins Museum in Kansas City.



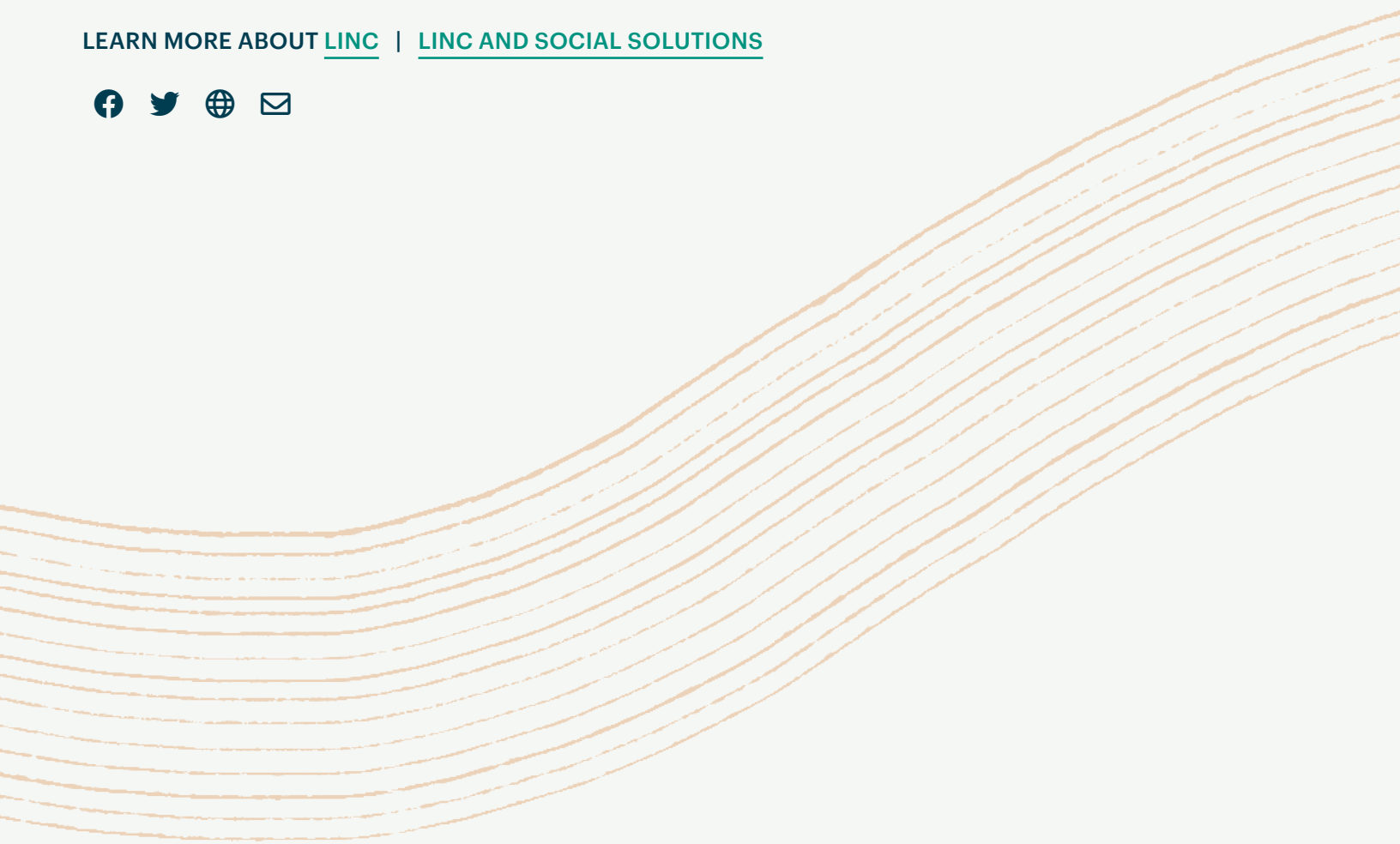
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LEARN MORE ABOUT [LINC](#) | [LINC AND SOCIAL SOLUTIONS](#)



**Ready to create lasting social change?
Get in touch today.**

See our solutions

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