

# Johnson Institute

for Responsible Leadership

By Kevin Kearns, Crystal Christophe, Michael Duane, Frankie Galizia, Daniel Ku, Lydia McShane

University of Pittsburgh  
Graduate School of Public and International Affairs  
3916 Wesley W. Posvar Hall  
230 S. Bouquet Street  
Pittsburgh, PA 15260  
412-648-1336

[www.johnsoninstitute-gspia.org](http://www.johnsoninstitute-gspia.org)

**GSPIA** University of Pittsburgh  
Graduate School of Public  
and International Affairs  
[www.gspia.pitt.edu](http://www.gspia.pitt.edu)

## *Bill Strickland and the Manchester Bidwell Corporation*



### Prelude

Like most living organisms, nonprofit and business enterprises seek to grow. Growth distributes the services of an organization to a larger audience, thus advancing the mission. Growth spreads the “brand” of the organization, creating wider visibility and awareness. Growth can attract more resources to help ensure the organization’s future. Growth can lead to economies of scale and help the organization to be more efficient. But growth can be also done for less noble objectives such as self-promotion.

Regardless of the motive, growth poses special challenges for any organization. For example, the management team may struggle to oversee a growing operation, perhaps with branches in distant locations. Or the quality of products or programs may suffer when there is pressure to produce them in larger numbers.

Sometimes it is not desirable to exert central control of a growing enterprise, especially when distant markets have their own special needs or distinctive consumer preferences. In these cases, the organization sometimes spins off affiliate organizations or regional branch offices that are at least somewhat autonomous from the central headquarters giving them some flexibility in responding to local needs and demands.

This is the story of the Manchester Bidwell Corporation (MBC), a Pittsburgh-based nonprofit organization that has attracted international attention for its success in providing afterschool arts programs for at-risk youth and for its job training programs for chronically unemployed adults. Bill Strickland, the entrepreneurial CEO of MBC, has embarked on an ambitious growth strategy to “scale” his organization by spreading its philosophy and its programs to other cities.

Rather than setting up branch locations of MBC or even franchising the MBC business model, Strickland has chosen a replication strategy in which each target city designs and implements its own arts and job training center patterned after, but not formally affiliated with, MBC in Pittsburgh.

Through MBC’s affiliate, the National Center for Arts and Technology (NCAT), Strickland’s team provides, for a fee, assistance in market analysis, fund development, location analysis, and other essential steps in the business planning process in candidate cities. Once they are operational, however, the replicated centers are autonomous organizations, separately incorporated, but unified by a common vision and philosophy for providing services. At the time of this



writing, nine centers were fully operational in the United States and another was recently opened in Israel. In addition, five centers are in the feasibility phase. The ultimate goal is to replicate 200 such centers in the U.S. and abroad.

This case study presents the familiar dilemma for organizations attempting to grow in this manner: how to meet the ambitious growth goal while simultaneously ensuring quality programing.

## Part I- A Brief History of the Manchester Bidwell Corporation

Bill Strickland graciously welcomes visitors to his attractive center on the North Side of Pittsburgh. On the walls and bookshelves are mementoes, including photos with international leaders and celebrities, and various awards for civic engagement and professional accomplishment. A plaque for the elite McArthur Fellowship, the so-called “Genius Award,” given annually to people who show exceptional merit and talent for creative work hangs on the wall. Bill won that award in 1996. Also on the shelf is the 2014 Exemplary Leadership Award from the Johnson Institute for Responsible Leadership at the University of Pittsburgh.

The building in which Bill sits was designed by the renowned architect Tasso Katselas. The entry foyer is an atrium, bathed in sunshine from an abundance of skylights, typical of many of Katselas’ award-winning designs. Large and beautiful quilts adorn the walls and original ceramic artwork is perfectly placed to catch the light. The corporate boardroom is furnished with custom designed furniture, including a conference table that was hand carved and constructed by the Japanese woodworker, Tadao Arimoto.<sup>1</sup> Dispersed throughout the building are fresh flowers exuding lush fragrance twelve months a year. In the courtyard, just beyond the large windows, is a fountain reaching skyward, surrounded by trees and attractive seating for conversation or private reflection. The luncheon menu, posted outside the colorful dining area, boasts an array of healthy gourmet selections. The entire building hums with professional activity and human purpose.

Is this the headquarters of one of Pittsburgh’s corporate giants? No. This extraordinary building is home to the Manchester Bidwell Corporation (MBC), a nonprofit organization situated in one of Pittsburgh’s poorest neighborhoods whose signature programs are an after-school arts program for youth provided by the Manchester Craftsmen’s Guild and career training for unemployed adults provided by the Bidwell Training Center.



Some of the neighboring properties are vacant lots and abandoned warehouses. But even that landscape is changing because MBC purchased several parcels for redevelopment. Among the buildings that now occupy former blighted lots is Harbor Gardens Park, a beautiful office building that houses the National Center for Art and Technology (NCAT), the replication arm of MBC. The building also contains 65,000 feet of space for corporate tenants. A block away, MBC acquired a former industrial site and built the Drew Mathieson Center for Horticultural and Agricultural Technology, a state-of-the-art educational greenhouse that trains adults for careers in landscaping, design, retail or wholesale floral, greenhouse operations and other “green” industries. The Mathieson Center grows rare and beautiful Phalaenopsis orchids year-round and a variety of annuals, ferns, and herbs. These are sold at a profit to grocery stores in Pittsburgh and the surrounding communities. Proceeds from both of these “social enterprises” support Manchester Bidwell’s charitable programs.

MCG Jazz is another social enterprise that advances and supports MBC’s mission. Since 1987, more than half a million patrons have attended jazz concerts in MBC’s acoustically advanced 350-seat concert hall. The annual concert series has featured noted artists such as Joe Williams, Billy Taylor, Dizzy Gillespie, Stanley Turrentine,

Will Strickland modify his goal or his model? Will he move toward greater standardization? Not likely. He states:

*I don't want to control them. I am perfectly happy that they set up their own organizations and do a good job. We don't want to own them. At the end of the day, the Center belongs to the community where it is. So, that's fine with me.*

But when asked how NCAT can continue to scale at a pace even approaching the goal of 200 centers, Strickland responds:

*I have no idea. If you were to ask me fifteen years ago how we were going to do eight cities, I would say I don't know. I think that the answer to that is going to come out of the process itself. You know, we have a half dozen people working on this stuff (in NCAT), and as they get more sophisticated in the way that they manage that process, there are efficiencies and economies of scale and we get more sophisticated as a result. So I don't think that growth problem is on us just yet. We've got some room to work with; about another half a dozen cities.*

Nzambi thinks the answer may involve replicating NCAT (replicating the replicator) or dividing into regional offices. He said:

*We're going to end up clustering by state, and we're going to end up dividing into regions. So right now, the national center has everybody, but at some point we're going to start designating regional heads and probably doing it that way as well.*

Strickland, if not dubious, wants to postpone consideration of that model, stating:

*For now, this whole regional thing is for another conversation. I don't have a clue as to how that would work. Fortunately, we don't have to worry about it today.*

But clearly some members of Strickland’s staff and governing board are worried about it and wonder what type of strategy will emerge to realize the dream of 200 centers around the world patterned after the Pittsburgh-based MBC.

## Discussion Questions for Part III

1. We are perhaps most familiar with scaling retail and fast food chains. What are the unique challenges of scaling a social enterprise like MBC?
2. Bill Strickland found “local champions” in New Haven, San Francisco and Chicago who helped to compensate for his perceived status as an “outsider.” Outline a plan for how Strickland could identify potential champions for replication in other cities. What challenges might he face in the process and how might he overcome them?
3. Mr. Strickland opposes standardization of all of the centers because he wants them to address the specific needs in the communities where they are located. Conversely, some people have advised that at least little more standardization will be required to improve efficiency and to meet the goal of 200 centers around the world. What is your opinion? Is there a way to strike a balance between these two philosophies?
4. Is consensus on the replication strategy essential for moving forward?



<sup>1</sup> Source: <http://old.post-gazette.com/columnists/20000604rubin.asp>



Nzambi says that the feasibility process is so intense that important relationships are formed that carry through to the following phases of strategic planning and implementation: “The process of going through the feasibility study is the process of establishing all the relationships that you’re going to need as the center moves forward.” Strickland adds, “It’s a lot of leg work. You got to go knock on doors before you find the right folks.”

Subsequent assistance provided by NCAT includes staff training, assistance with incorporation and state licensing, assistance with curriculum design, equipment specifications for arts and job training labs, and other operational details.

As of this writing, NCAT was conducting feasibility studies in five cities simultaneously with only eight full-time staff members. Nzambi notes:

*It’s very busy, but that’s why you need very elegantly designed feasibility processes and metrics. And that’s why you also need to continuously refine and build out those processes to develop the type of efficiencies that allow this thing to keep working the way it does.*

But efficient processes alone are not enough. Like any reputable consulting firm, NCAT employees each have knowledge and skills on a variety of topics including curriculum design, arts programming, hiring, and building design that give them the credibility to consult with cities. Nzambi describes the challenges:

*All of our employees have interdisciplinary backgrounds. We have a person who specializes in youth arts curriculum, but we also have somebody who spent a lot of years doing research so when we brought her on board, we re-tooled our feasibility studies. When we bought one of the youth arts administrators on board, they had a very strong technical background in information systems. So, we have our own proprietary software to manage our youth arts program. The person that we brought on for the career schools has a very strong background in organization and operations. And their focus had been admissions and recruitment. Another staff person has extensive knowledge in classroom instruction. We want to bring on a full time architect because we realize that’s a very important part of the model and they can help us both in feasibility and through the planning process and as more and more centers are going through it.*

Nzambi states that he envisions a community or network of centers across the country that can share ideas and collectively improve their programming and develop new templates for future centers:

*There’s a lot of learning that is taking place within the centers that we want to be able to bring back. NCAT becomes not only the national center that replicates, but also the hub where we can share the best, the brightest, the most innovative ideas about education and workforce development.*

### The Capacity Dilemma: How to Scale NCAT?

Strickland has publicly embraced an audacious goal of 200 centers – 100 in the United States and 100 internationally. But with under a dozen centers now in operation and several more in various stages of feasibility planning, NCAT is working at full capacity. The strategic challenge is how to build NCAT’s capacity to scale while simultaneously ensuring quality.

Moreover, the challenge of creating centers in certain parts of the country will be much more daunting. Nzambi reflects:

*Right now, if you were to put them all on the map, you would see East Coast, West Coast, and some Middle America, but you won’t see much in the South at all. And that’s an area where we’re going to have to pay some attention to because there’s real need there. But there isn’t the same industrial-based philanthropy that the North really benefitted from. And when you don’t have that in certain places, it’s much harder to . . . generate the kind of philanthropic sentiment, but also actual dollars that will support an effort like this.*

Steve Sarowitz thinks that the answer may be more standardization of the centers:

*I think we need to do a better job of going forward to replicate in a larger way. I think we need to standardize it in a big way more so than we’ve done it at this point. Paulo has got a lot of work in front of him . . . I would love to see a lot more standardization – a real blueprint each time we go into a city. If you’re going to go into thirty or forty cities, you need to finish, over the course of a few years; you need to have real blueprints of each city that’s relatively standardized.*

Ray Brown, and Nancy Wilson. Many of these artists have donated the recording rights to MBC, resulting in earned revenue from the sale of the recordings. With over 300 CDs in its archives, MCG Jazz is one of the nation’s leading repositories of original jazz recordings. MCG Jazz has commercially released 40 CDs and has won five GRAMMY Awards including two Latin GRAMMYs.<sup>2</sup>

The building where nonprofit services such as the after-school arts programs for at-risk youth are delivered is noteworthy not only for what it contains, but for what it does NOT contain. There are no security cameras, no metal detectors at the entrance, no security guards, no bars on the windows. Bill says emphatically, “Most schools and training centers look like prisons. If you treat kids like prisoners, they’ll behave like prisoners. But if you surround them with beautiful things, bathe them in sunlight, and feed them good food, they will respond in kind. We have never had one act of vandalism or theft in this building.”

The outcomes and impact of the Manchester Craftsmen’s Guild are impressive. Bill points proudly to fact that, “The arts get kids to graduate from high school in pretty dramatic numbers. In 2014, 98% of the kids we work with graduated from high school, and we have averaged 90% for 20 years in a row. And this is a group that historically has a 50% drop out rate from public schools.”<sup>3</sup>

The intent of the program is not necessarily to produce professional artists, but rather to give youth the opportunity to explore their own creativity, appreciate the creativity of others, and fuel their aspirations for something far beyond their current circumstances.

The adult education program in the Bidwell Training Center (BTC) also demonstrates tangible outcomes. Each course of study is carefully designed in partnership with local corporations to prepare students to enter professions with high paying jobs upon graduation. Many of BTC’s courses of study feature externships, giving students practical on-the-job experience plus valuable professional contacts and references. The courses of study can lead to an associate’s degree in specialized technology (Chemical Laboratory Technician) and diplomas in culinary arts,

horticulture technology, medical records management, pharmacy technician, and other specialized programs. Graduates enter careers, not dead-end jobs. Bill likes to say, “We have trained chronically unemployed adults for quality jobs that require professional skills.” The graduation rate for all combined majors is 82% and placement rate is 77%.<sup>4</sup> But it is also a win-win for the corporations that rely on BTC to help them meet their diversity goals. For some companies, the BTC curriculum is an internal employee training program, but BTC itself adds significant value by providing a strong culture of professionalism and achievement to help trainees succeed in their studies.

Thus, the Manchester Bidwell Corporation defies a simple description or label. It is part adult education, part after-school arts programming, part land developer, part landlord, part music conservatory, part record label, part urban redevelopment agency, and part brownfield reclamation project.

If there is one term that aptly describes this fascinating place, it is “social enterprise” – the pairing of hard-nosed business management philosophy with remarkable insights into the root causes of hopelessness among the poor and disenfranchised.

### Bill Strickland

Bill Strickland’s personal story is equally intriguing. He grew up in the nearby neighborhood of Manchester and likes to say that he was born, was raised, and will die within the same square mile. His early life was characterized by uncertainty, poverty, and exclusion. Drifting through high school with little purpose, and the low grades to prove it, the young Strickland happened upon the classroom where Frank Ross<sup>5</sup> was teaching a class in pottery. Bill was immediately impressed, not just by the finished product, but by the painstaking process of pottery making – selection of the clay, molding and trimming the clay on the wheel, heating, glazing and painting the finished product. It is a process that takes time, patience, creativity, coordination, and concentration.

<sup>2</sup> [http://manchesterbidwell.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/FactsandFigures\\_111513b.pdf](http://manchesterbidwell.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/FactsandFigures_111513b.pdf)  
<sup>3</sup> [http://mcgyouthandarts.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/2013-14\\_prog\\_report.pdf](http://mcgyouthandarts.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/2013-14_prog_report.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> [http://manchesterbidwell.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/FactsandFigures\\_111513b.pdf](http://manchesterbidwell.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/FactsandFigures_111513b.pdf)  
<sup>5</sup> [https://www.ted.com/talks/bill\\_strickland\\_makes\\_change\\_with\\_a\\_slide\\_show?language=en#t-588033](https://www.ted.com/talks/bill_strickland_makes_change_with_a_slide_show?language=en#t-588033)





Strickland soon discovered that applying these same principles could help him do better in his school work. Working at the potter's wheel and producing something of lasting beauty helped Bill realize that he had untapped talents, capabilities, and potential not just as an artist but as a student and a person of value.

He enrolled at the University of Pittsburgh on probationary status and graduated cum laude with a degree in history. He is now a member of the University's Board of Trustees. "I was admitted to Pitt as just another Black kid on probation and now I'm a trustee at the place," Bill says with a wry smile. "Imagine that!"

## Early Challenges and Successes

In 1972, Strickland accepted an offer to direct the Bidwell Training Center, a remnant of the 1960s war on poverty.<sup>6</sup> Several days into his new role, he was informed by the IRS that the organization was delinquent on payroll taxes and was near bankruptcy. Moreover, BTC's warehouse-like building was literally crumbling beneath him. "Had I known what I was getting into, I might not have taken the job."

After gaining control of revenues and expenditures, Bill somehow persuaded Tasso Katselas to design a building that exemplified Bill's philosophy and vision – full of natural sunlight and warmth, earth tone colors, and workspaces that are suited to their purpose. An outsider might wonder how Bill persuaded Katselas and other prominent people to buy into his vision. Strickland recalls "carrying the scale model of the building all over town,

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.bidwell-training.org/about/history/>

looking for money to build it from foundations, corporations, anyone willing to make the investment." Through his vision and persistence, Bill eventually secured the funds to build his state-of-the-art facility and in the process laid the foundation for successful partnerships with community leaders.

Encouraged by his success, Strickland called upon the late John Heinz, US Senator from Pennsylvania and heir to the Heinz food empire. According to Bill, this meeting resulted in one of his first corporate partnerships. Senator Heinz promised to invest in a state-of-the-art kitchen if Bill would offer a culinary arts program to train people to work in the Heinz plants. "Suddenly we were in the culinary arts business."

Other partnerships followed with the Bayer Chemical Company, the Giant Eagle supermarket chain, and the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center (UPMC) among others. Soon the graduates of the Bidwell Training Center were securing meaningful jobs at pay scales unheard of in the adult job training industry. Why? Because the companies that helped develop the job training curriculum also wanted to hire the graduates. It was a win-win situation for everyone. MBC received state-of-the-art curricula from the companies and the companies received well-trained and reliable employees who also helped them meet goals in diversity and community service.

Meanwhile, the after-school arts program was achieving its own outstanding results. With success came growth and with growth came increasingly complex and sophisticated systems and structures to support the organizations. The Manchester Bidwell Corporation (MBC) was formed to serve as a holding company for the various affiliates. Today, a variety of nonprofit and for-profit enterprises are under the Manchester Bidwell umbrella, including substantial investments in real estate development in the blighted neighborhood surrounding the shining center.<sup>7</sup>

## How Manchester Bidwell Works

**Manchester Bidwell Corporation** serves as the parent company for a number of affiliates and provides them with consolidated administrative functions such as finance,

<sup>7</sup> <http://manchesterbidwell.org/about/about-mbc/corporate-structure/>

As of this writing, US centers have been established in San Francisco, Chicago, Grand Rapids, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Sharon, PA, Brockway, PA, Buffalo, and New Haven. In 2016, the newest center opened in Akko, Israel, which serves Palestinian and Israeli kids together under one roof. Strickland hopes the Akko center will, in his words, "possibly alter a conflict that has lasted for centuries."

## How the Scaling Process Works

The National Center for Arts and Technology (NCAT) operates somewhat autonomously, with its own executive staff and advisory board. It even occupies office space separate from MBC. Yet, NCAT is actually a supporting organization of MBC – it is officially governed by the MBC board. Bill Strickland serves as CEO of both organizations.

The daily operations of NCAT are managed by Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer Paulo Nzambi who, like Strickland, brings a distinctive mix of skills and perspectives to the task.

Nzambi is former trial lawyer, published poet and playwright, real estate entrepreneur, and triathlete. He seems to bring each of these personas when he bounds into a room to greet a visitor, exuding a contagious kinetic energy and enthusiasm. But when he talks of NCAT's model, enthusiasm alone is not sufficient – his business and legal acumen is on full display as he describes NCAT in crisp terms:

*NCAT in its pure sense is a consulting organization. One of the ways that we differ from a traditional consultant is that rather than simply doing an analysis, delivering findings and recommendations and walking away, our process is what we've termed "collaborative consultation." Not only do we do all those things, but we actually partner with the city and the civic leadership to implement the recommendations in the report. Our feasibility report is really part feasibility report, part strategic plan for the opening of the organization. And then NCAT stays with the organization through its next phases and maintains a relationship with it over a course of five years. So we don't actually step away from the process at all.*

The consulting does not come cheaply. A city that is interested in establishing a center based on the MBC model must first raise \$150,000 to contract with NCAT to do a feasibility study. If NCAT demonstrates the feasibility of a center and if the city wishes to continue, then it must commit an additional \$300,000 for the planning stage which can last up to 24 months, and finally \$150,000 for implementation. Then, once the CAT has been operational for 2 years, NCAT provide maintenance assistance and support for 2% of the organization's operating budget plus expenses.<sup>13</sup> The potential of a minimum \$600,000 commitment to NCAT, in addition to other direct start-up and operational expenses for the first few years (typically \$5-6 million), ensures that cities must display much more than mere interest or enthusiasm for the model – they must be capable of supporting it financially.<sup>14</sup>

The feasibility studies conducted by NCAT are in-depth, labor-intensive, and data driven, including:

- Assessment of community needs, especially poor academic achievement among youth and unemployment among adults;
- Identification of organizations currently providing services in the community to avoid duplication and to encourage collaboration;
- Site location analysis that focuses exclusively on existing buildings in poor neighborhoods that can be renovated thereby contributing to community revitalization;
- Assessment of the leadership infrastructure in the community, including people who can govern the center and people who are candidates for management; and,
- Analysis of funding opportunities in the city, including corporate and government support as well as philanthropic resources.

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.ncat-mbc.org/>

<sup>14</sup> When Strickland first envisioned the scaling challenge, he hoped that the federal government would make a commitment to building the centers. In fact, federal legislation was actually written to accomplish this, but never brought to a vote.



## Part III- The Scaling Strategy

As Strickland traveled the country and the world giving his well-practiced speech about MBC, he noticed that people were enthused about the model, but were quick to add that the problems and opportunities in their communities were not exactly like those in Pittsburgh. Scott Lamie, chair of the MBC board of directors, observes:

*We noticed early on that each community has its own unique attributes that need to be developed and emphasized. For example, the San Francisco site is really into providing training and arts programs that emphasize graphic design and other skills that are specific to the Bay Area technology community and market. We don't want people in Cincinnati to think that they're kind of doing something that's a Pittsburgh model.*

Moreover, some communities were intensely attracted to the general philosophy and business model of MBC but did not want an outsider, no matter how charismatic, engaged in the planning, development, and operation of the centers. Carlton Highsmith, a retired business owner in New Haven, Connecticut recalls:

*Bill came to New Haven and he gave his speech to community leaders. A lot of people got really excited about the possibility of building a center in here in New Haven. But, unfortunately, when Bill left, the excitement seemed to die down and nothing really happened. He came back three years later to give essentially the same speech, and essentially the same result . . . nothing happens. Moreover, there was considerable tension in the early days. We had a very vocal mayor of this city at the time who personally attacked Bill as an outsider . . . saying "How could Strickland possibly understand what the issues were in New Haven?" We had other leaders of long standing non-profits who came out very vocally . . . condemning the notion that a Pittsburgh resident could come in to New Haven and tell New Haven what New Haven needs. Then he appeared a third time in 2008 and it was during that visit when I actually met him for the first time . . . He felt that New Haven needed and could in fact support one of those centers and he felt that a local champion was needed to mobilize resources and build momentum.*

So it quickly became apparent to Strickland and his board that a franchise model, with each center being an identical replica of Pittsburgh, would not work; nor would a federation model, with common branding and similar programming.<sup>12</sup>

Instead, what has evolved gradually is a kind of incubation model in which MBC will, for a fee, conduct an extensive feasibility study in an interested city. The feasibility study is conducted by an affiliate of MBC, the National Center for Arts and Technology (NCAT), which is staffed with business consultants. Then, for a five-year period, NCAT provides technical assistance during the crucial start-up phase of a center. Each location will provide after school arts programming for youth and job training programs for adults. Moreover, each center must buy into the general philosophy of building design and aesthetics that provide a welcoming atmosphere. But each center will be a fully independent organization, locally funded, and led by staff and trustees from the community. Programming varies from city to city depending on economic needs and partnerships with corporations.

It is essential for each city to have a champion. Strickland seems to draw entrepreneurs to him such as Jeff Skoll in San Francisco, Carlton Highsmith in New Haven, and Steve Sarowitz in Chicago. Sarowitz says:

*Bill has great ideas, great energy towards those ideas, great passion around those ideas. And, that's how I've always been myself. In terms of entrepreneurship I absolutely respect that, and resonate with it, and I believe he resonates as well with me. In Chicago, we want to do job training in manufacturing. Well MBC in Pittsburgh has not historically done training in manufacturing. But in our market, there are a lot of manufacturing jobs available if people get the training.*

<sup>12</sup> An example of a franchise is McDonalds and many other fast food chains. Each franchise offers a nearly identical menu in a nearly identical space. Recipes, processes, vendors, and branding are tightly controlled by a central office. An example of a federation is the United Way with its many affiliates around the country. Each affiliate is a separately governed organization, but they must adhere to certain standards to use the United Way brand and they generally pay dues to a central office.

human resources, development, facility maintenance, marketing, and public relations. These combined functions serve to reduce overhead and make the family of organizations more cost-effective as a whole.

**Bidwell Training Center (BTC)** – an affiliate of Manchester Bidwell Corporation – Founded in 1968 by Bidwell Street Presbyterian Church and the Manchester community, our program has evolved from a local trade school to an accredited and state-licensed career training for adults in transition and is focused on job placement.

**The Drew Mathieson Center for Horticultural and Agricultural Technology** – Serving two purposes, our 40,000 square foot complex supports training in the plant sciences as well as being a production greenhouse producing orchids and other specialty crops for wholesale.

**Manchester Craftsmen's Guild (MCG)** – an affiliate of Manchester Bidwell Corporation – Founded in 1968 by Bill Strickland as an after school ceramics program for the disadvantaged youth of his neighborhood, we have expanded MCG's programming to include more art studios as well as a Jazz division.

**MCG Youth & Arts** – an affiliate of Manchester Bidwell Corporation – Our out-of-school-time courses — based in ceramics, digital, design and photography art studios — are primarily for high-school-age students.

**MCG Jazz** – an affiliate of Manchester Bidwell Corporation – We preserve, promote and present jazz music through live concerts, archival recordings and educational programming.

**Manchester Bidwell Development Trust** – an affiliate of Manchester Bidwell Corporation – Our trust was created in 1998 to establish endowments to secure and sustain the programs of BTC and MCG.

**National Center for Arts & Technology** – an affiliate of Manchester Bidwell Corporation – Our consulting group specializes in helping create centers of arts and technology based on the Manchester Bidwell educational model across the United States and the world.

<http://manchesterbidwell.org/about/about-mbc/corporate-structure/>

## Discussion Questions for Part I

1. Bill Strickland inherited an organization that was financially troubled. Brainstorm different approaches leaders can take to stabilize a distressed organization.
2. To date, how would you describe the growth strategy that MBC has pursued? What lessons, if any, can Bill Strickland and his team apply to the next phase of growth?
3. Examine MBC's current portfolio of programs and services. Are there natural synergies between these programs and services? In other words, do these programs and services complement each other? What are the challenges in managing a diversified portfolio of programs and services?
4. Does MBC have a clearly identifiable comparative advantage? If so, describe it and outline a strategy to protect and build upon that comparative advantage.





## Part II- Gaining Visibility

As MBC achieved more and more impressive results, Strickland knew that it was time to tell the story to a variety of audiences. Believing that pictures speak better than words, Bill compiled an impressive set of photographs that he displayed at public speaking engagements. Bill's charismatic presence, combined with the slide show, leaves audiences spellbound. An example of Strickland's presentations can be found at:

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xoHBiHFV9SA>  
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jA7nO7QzzfI>

The slide show moves along until Strickland comes to a picture of a group of women working in a chemistry laboratory, staring intently into beakers and test tubes. They are part of the pharmacy technician program at the Bidwell Training Center.

*And I will guarantee you that if you come to my center in Pittsburgh . . . you will see chronically unemployed adults doing analytical chemistry . . . ten months from enrollment in the program. There is absolutely no reason why poor people can't learn world-class technologies. What we discovered is you have to give them flowers and sunlight and food and expectations and harmonious music, and you can cure a spiritual cancer every time.*

His message has a unique appeal. Progressives respond to his passion and empathy for children and adults who have been marginalized or abandoned by society. Conservatives like his entrepreneurial, business-oriented approach that demands a commitment from his clients and results from his employees. Bill himself explains why MBC is not a "charity:"

*Because the way in which we approach things is to look at the constituency as the set of assets in disguise. And, what that means is we think that providing the resources for people will allow them to take charge of their life . . . The charitable strategy is a maintenance strategy. For example, you have a homeless shelter, and there are people who come there because they don't have a roof over their head. And they need to eat, and be housed and bathed, which is fine. But that doesn't change their circumstances. It only helps them to administer their circumstances where they are. MBC is a place to change your life. We're interested in a significant shift in the way that the students who come here do business in the future for themselves.*

The story of MBC began to spread, first regionally, then nationally, and eventually, internationally. Soon Strickland was addressing graduate students at major universities, entrepreneurs and venture capitalists in the Silicon Valley, and business and government leaders around the globe. Winning the MacArthur Award and writing a best-selling book on his philosophy, *Making the Impossible Possible* helped build visibility and credibility for his work.<sup>8</sup>

### Is it "Scalable"?

After one of his speaking engagements in California, a man from the audience approached him:

*When I was out there at the Silicon Valley, I met another guy [who] came out of the audience. This kid said, "Man what a presentation." And I said, "Thanks, what do you do for a living?" He said, "Oh, I built a company called Ebay." I said, "Oh, that's cool. You got a card? Remember, I ain't the techie guy; I didn't know what Ebay was. So I stuck the guy's card in my pocket and went back to Pittsburgh and asked one of the little techie kids, "What is Ebay?" I said, "Holy smokes, I met the guy that built the company." So I called him up and said, "Mr. Skoll, I've come to have a much deeper appreciation of who you are." And he laughed and he said, "I thought you'd figure it out sooner or later. You're really onto something. Here's \$500,000." I said, "What's that for?" He says, "Your first replication." And against all probability, Jeff Skoll and I have become very close friends.<sup>9</sup>*

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.macfound.org/fellows/546/>  
<sup>9</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b6h91c4TYis>

Skoll raised funds to construct a center in San Francisco patterned after MBC but with its own distinct identity and name, BAYCAT — the Bayview Hunter's Point Center for Arts and Technology with the help of jazz musician Herbie Hancock.<sup>10</sup>

Bill learned a lot during the process of building the San Francisco center, much of it sobering. There were delays in fundraising, site location, land acquisition, leadership selection, and many other details. Bill found himself spending more and more time traveling between Pittsburgh and San Francisco. He soon realized that MBC in Pittsburgh could not run on its own. The death of Jesse Fife, his long-time friend and chief operating officer, made it even more evident that Bill could not be in two places at the same time – running the day-to-day operations in Pittsburgh, while also launching the new center in San Francisco. Moreover, Bill continued to be in demand as a speaker. In cities across the country, prominent community members were inspired by Bill's story and began considering building centers like MBC in their cities.<sup>11</sup>

He began to entertain a bold, some say audacious, vision of 200 centers like MBC around the world. "I've discovered the cure for social cancer and with more centers like mine, we can change the world."

<sup>10</sup> <http://research.wpcarey.asu.edu/management-entrepreneurship/bill-strickland-role-model-for-social-entrepreneurship/>; also <https://seekerblog.com/2010/07/22/baycat-bayview-hunters-point-center-for-arts-and-technology/>  
<sup>11</sup> <http://pittsburghurbanmedia.com/Pittsburgh-Urban-Media-Mourns-the-Death-of-Jesse-Fife-Jr--senior-vice-president-and-chief-operations-at-Manchester-Bidwell-Corporation/>

## Discussion Questions for Part II

The business world has demonstrated that an organization can "scale" or grow its impact in one or more of the following ways:

- a. **Replication:** Spreading the business model to new geographic areas or audiences through the creation of new entities or helping existing organizations to mimic the business model and operations. The replicating organizations usually are at least partially autonomous, and sometimes fully autonomous, from the replicated organization.
- b. **Wholly Owned Replication:** Similar to the "branch" structure in banking where replicating organization creates, owns, and operates the replicated entity.
- c. **Affiliation Based Replication:** Use of contracts and partnerships with entities that are at least semi-autonomous but agree to a set of common standards for programs and services. Affiliation models include:
  - i. Franchising/Licensing: a contractual relationship in which affiliated entities operate under the same trade name and business model;
  - ii. Joint Venture: Two or more organizations agree to embark on a shared goal, often through the creation of a

new entity that is substantially controlled by the parties to the agreement who share the costs and benefits of the venture;

iii. **Partnership:** An agreement between two or more organizations to pursue a common goal with each partner responsible for a specified set of obligations, each retaining total autonomy.

d. **Dissemination:** An approach in which an organization makes available information about its business model, perhaps through publications or educational programs, so that others can adopt the approach often with substantial modifications to meet their needs.

After reading Part 2 of the case study, evaluate the approaches listed above (or others that you identify through your own research) regarding their ability to help Bill Strickland achieve two prime objectives:

1. Continue to grow the capacity and effectiveness of the Pittsburgh-based MBC; and 2) help other communities around the world use the MBC model to build their own centers.
2. Identify the various stakeholders who will likely have an opinion and/or role in the replication strategy. Who among these stakeholders will likely be in favor of the replication strategy? Will anyone likely be opposed or at least skeptical? How should Bill Strickland build support for the strategy?