



Letters to and From the Field

Dear Friends,

At Urban Strategies, Inc. (USI), we believe in the power of people and place. Our commitment is simple but profound: to improve lives, strengthen local ecosystems, and transform what equitable community development looks and feels like across this country. As a national “think and do” enterprise, working alongside residents in 63 communities, we know that the wisdom, strength, and solutions needed to create lasting change already live within the communities themselves.

However, too often, community-driven solutions are ignored. Or worse—co-opted, reshaped, and repackaged as “community-informed,” while leaving real voices out. Programs with good intentions but limited impact take the stage, while local brilliance is left behind.

At USI, we believe it’s time to change that. Together—with you, with community members, with partners who share this vision—we can reimagine what gets shared and scaled, how voices are heard, and how true transformation happens. We need you. Because real progress doesn’t come from a singular perspective—it comes from committed people building together.

We invite you to subscribe and contribute to our new integrated platform called Letters to and from the Field. Our goal is to galvanize the community of funders and partners with storytelling, resource development, coalition-building and engagement, creating a repository of promising practices that influence the industry to think and act differently in service to real results.

Letters to and from the Field will:

- Center community storytelling for coalition building around the successes of children and families throughout the USI partner network and field of influence.
- Dismantle power differentials that currently exist in the field demonstrating what “community driven” looks like in practice and building proof points that show its impact.
- Create a repository where partners like you can both share to and draw from to drive results and transform the field of community and economic development.

In a world of instant messages and fleeting notifications, there's something hauntingly beautiful about a handwritten letter. Not just the paper and ink, but the pause it asks of us—the time, intention, and emotion poured into every line. Letters are slow. Perhaps that's part of their power.

It's been 62 years since Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr penned his now famous Letter from the Birmingham Jail. Yet reading it now, I feel:

Urgency. Intention. Fire. Hope. Love.

Dr. King could have chosen any number of ways to respond to the clergymen who had called his actions “unwise” and “untimely.” But he chose to write a letter. A letter is personal. It's vulnerable. It's deliberate. There's no hiding behind soundbites or applause. Every word he wrote was chosen with care, laid down with courage, and offered without any promise that it would be received with understanding. He wrote anyway.

In the days ahead, may we do the same. Together.

In Partnership,



Kristie Stutler
Vice President, USI Policy & Influence



Have a letter, policy brief, community driven solution to share?
Email Kristie.Stutler@usi-inc.org to begin the process.

