



LEADERSHIP PROFILE



President & CEO
MDC, Inc.
Durham, North Carolina

“Shaping a South where all people thrive.”

--MDC’s defining vision

INTRODUCTION

[MDC](#) is a catalyzing force for economic progress in the South. For 50 years it has been a vital player in connecting the region’s most vulnerable populations to economic growth opportunities. MDC works as an intermediary with foundations and community leaders to provide data, insight and expertise which illuminate the unique challenges of the South, create a narrative of empowerment, galvanize action, and build and scale an “Infrastructure of Opportunity” at the local level.

MDC’s reputation is stellar among the dozens of communities that have witnessed first-hand the power of its evidence-based approach to systemic change, even if many people affected by its work may have never heard of the organization. As the board chair of a significant regional foundation noted, speaking of their early experiences with MDC,

MDC got us to look beyond ourselves, beyond the local, short-term needs we were [initially] focused on and helped us see the power of a strategic perspective supported by patient investment in lasting solutions.

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Another leader who engages with philanthropic boards and staffs across much of MDC's service footprint was even more succinct: "MDC is our best partnership."

To its clients and partners, MDC is a respected catalyst for change, operating at the intersection of systems, leadership and culture. Its abilities are broad. MDC provides research, thought-leadership, consulting and capacity building. Yet, most of MDC's resources are dedicated to innovation on the ground and helping communities and institutions design and implement programs and systems change.

To broader audiences, MDC may be well known for its signature publication, [*State of the South*](#), a periodic report on the region's overall progress in addressing deeply rooted Southern challenges. Its research and publications have changed the conversation and galvanized action regarding Southern priorities for over 40 years.

Critical to MDC's future is the pervasive and abiding commitment to helping leaders in the eleven state region from Texas to Virginia, improve education, employment, economic security and philanthropic outcomes, especially for the underserved and under-resourced.

This extraordinary organization has been led for the past two decades by David Dodson, a respected visionary known for his generous spirit, facile mind and unwavering commitment to addressing the South's economic and social barriers to opportunity. In recent months, Mr. Dodson informed MDC's board of his plans to retire in 2020, thus prompting the current search for his successor.



MDC's 50th-anniversary overview of regional strides in education, income and health (click image to access)

THE WORK

MDC exists to help the South move to a higher level of equity, opportunity and shared well-being. Fifty years after the Civil Rights Movement began, progress in the region has been uneven, and the vision of a truly inclusive and thriving South remains elusive. In fact, the data are clear: Income inequality is growing, schools are re-segregating and racial disparities in housing, health and employment remain pervasive. Federal and states legislation has at times been both asset and hindrance, but many historic structural inequities are never addressed. Solving these challenges requires innovative approaches, adaptive strategies and *persistence*, all of which are among MDC's stock-in-trade.

Over the last five decades, MDC has developed a strong track record of success. Some notable accomplishments include:

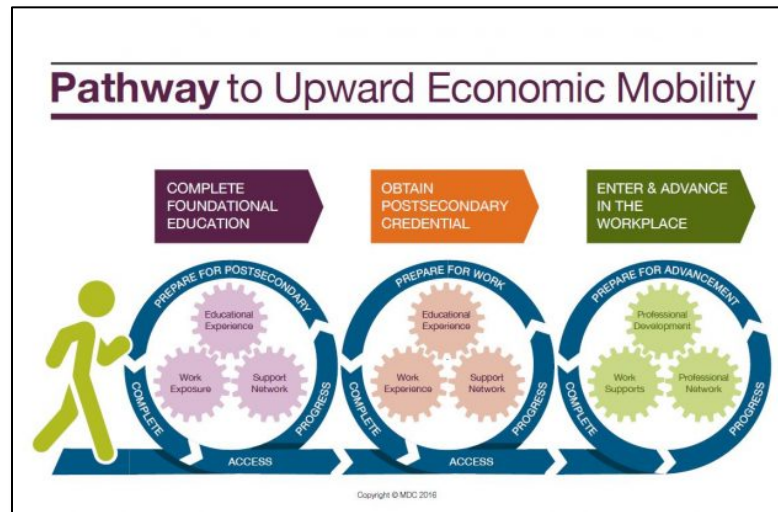
- MDC launched and incubated [Achieving the Dream](#), the nation's largest community-college reform effort, an organization which now helps more than 4 million community college students, many low-income and first-generation, have a better chance of realizing greater economic opportunity and achieving their dreams.
- It designed and managed major philanthropic initiatives to address poverty and regional development, such as the [Rural Community College Initiative](#) (1995-2004) funded by the Ford Foundation and the [Mary Reynolds Babcock Foundation Grassroots Leadership Initiatives](#) in the mid 2000's to elevate and support community level leaders working to advance social justice and equity. MDC also partnered with the Kate B. Reynolds Charitable Trust as the activating agency for the Trust's [Great Expectations](#) initiative. Great Expectations is one of the South's largest philanthropic investments designed to advance early childhood success.
- Its research and publications have been the catalyst for national dialogue and action. For example, [America's Shame, America's Hope](#) (1990) was a major report on "at-risk youth" shaped by a panel of eminent scholars chaired by Kenneth Clark (whose analysis was central to Brown v. Board of Education). The report later became a national PBS documentary by Bill Moyers. MDC's [State of the South](#) 2007 and 2016 publications catalyzed a growing movement to strengthen change-oriented "passing gear" philanthropy.

MDC's approach is comprehensive. It begins with data analysis, leverages a deep understanding of the region's history, embodies respect for the role of culture in moving a community and region forward, and applies an approach to impact that is integrated, collaborative and flexible.

MDC has spent the last year clarifying and focusing its work, culminating in a strategy of "Growth for Impact". It now concentrates its efforts in three areas:

- Economic Mobility. Launched in 2016, the [Network for Southern Economic Mobility](#), NSEM, convenes cohorts of leaders from participating cities wishing to leverage policy and operational changes to systems affecting youth mobility within their communities.

- [Family Economic Security](#). MDC develops programs that enable families and communities to weather hard times and sustain economic progress. One program, established at the height of the Great Recession in 2010, working in partnership with several other organizations, was [The Benefit Bank™](#) of North Carolina. The Bank connects low-income households with work and income support. Since its inception it has helped families in need apply for more than \$65M in aid and assistance.



- [Passing Gear Philanthropy Institute](#). MDC's work has been long inspired by Paul Ylvisaker's notion of philanthropy as society's passing gear.¹ After years of helping to equip individual foundations with the tools and perspective to tackle deep-seated issues, MDC has recently launched Passing Gear Philanthropy Institute to provide the opportunity for annual cohorts of four to six grant making organizations to work together to address barriers to opportunity and inclusion. The inaugural cohort convenes in January 2020.

In addition to its project work, MDC also invests in developing future leaders through the [Autry Fellowship](#). Each year since 2000, MDC has selected a recent college graduate to work for a year as a full-time staff member at MDC. Named in honor of MDC founder George Autry, the fellowships are awarded competitively. Recipients have gone onto careers in philanthropy, education, community development, financial empowerment and numerous other fields, most after continuing their formal education. All have retained the commitment to community enhancement that informed their time at MDC.



Some of MDC's 20 Autry Fellows

¹ MDC has helped foundations redirect more than \$1 billion over the past ten years to address root causes of inequity in education, employment, health and overall economic well-being.

MDC's commitment to helping communities, organizations and leaders collectively close the opportunity gap is fundamental. The next President will inherit the firm's considerable trove of data, in-house expertise and unparalleled knowledge of the region—and the opportunity to lead the organization to even greater impact.

THE ORGANIZATION

MDC was founded in 1967 as Manpower Development Corp. out of North Carolina Governor Terry Sanford's North Carolina Fund, in collaboration with the U.S. Office of Economic Opportunity and the National Association of Manufacturers. Its original mission— designing job training programs for poor and displaced workers transitioning to an industrial economy and an integrated workforce—has evolved to the current focus: working collaboratively to alleviate barriers to economic mobility and drive racial equity.

As befits an organization focused on closing the opportunity gap, MDC's [staff](#) is highly diverse, demographically and culturally. Its two dozen professionals have backgrounds in research, educational attainment, community development, public-private partnerships, policy, family economics, communications, workforce development, economic mobility and a host of other disciplines relevant to MDC and its clients.

MDC is governed by a [board of directors](#) comprising 15 highly respected leaders with deep perspectives on MDC's work drawn from their years of experience addressing issues of economic empowerment, opportunity and access at the community, regional and national levels.

MDC's budget, which has averaged about \$3.5 annually over the past six years, is derived from a varying mix of grants, contributions and fee-for-service contracts. MDC is blessed with many valued relationships, but the long-term perspective required for much of the organization's work does not fit easily into every potential funder's portfolio, and thus the quest for strategic financial support is ongoing.

The CEO search committee is made up of six MDC board members, all with considerable experience with the issues and communities of greatest interest to the organization. The overall search and the committee's deliberations will be conducted with full respect for candidate confidentiality. Given the organization's stated commitment to enhanced transparency in its internal interactions, select MDC staff will be invited to meet with final candidates.



*MDC's on-site conference facility,
available for use at nominal cost*

THE MANDATE

The next President of MDC will inherit an organization steeped in research, analysis, programming and consulting geared to “Shaping a South where all people thrive.”

As with many organizations fostering systemic change, MDC's story can be a challenging one to convey. Its mandate is so broad, its work so varied, and the issues with which it engages so complex, that the question of how to best convey its work and impact is regularly in play.

The next President of MDC can anticipate a multifaceted mandate, encompassing much of the following:

1. Provide leadership and vision required by an organization of MDC's reach to

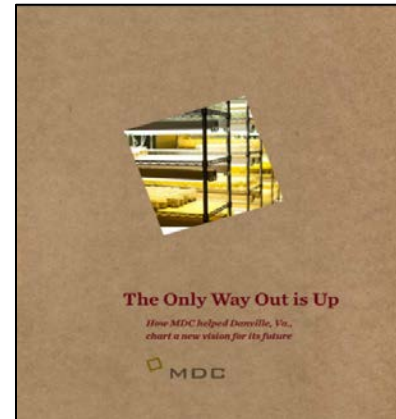
- Work with the board and staff to refine and expand upon existing strategy, with particular attention to focus, external messaging, internal accountability and funding
- Anticipate trends and opportunities, initiating and leading catalytic change to drive equity and economic mobility for those most in need
- Be a thought leader regarding the “State of the South” by gathering intelligence, sharing MDC's framing and analysis, and translating ideas back into action
- Inspire confidence with staff, partners and the larger community
- Champion the spirit and substance of the work to ensure foundational principles of racial and social justice, diversity, equity and inclusion undergird every aspect of the work—both internally and externally.

2. Develop and implement a diversified funding strategy to support growth & sustainable impact

- Be a persuasive advocate for the mission, persistent in attracting the necessary resources and creative in developing supportive relationships
- Inspire confidence with existing funders and partners
- Create the infrastructure within MDC to support a sophisticated development function, and enlist the full team in building a culture of philanthropy internally
- Build an expanded, diversified funding portfolio that includes grants and major donors

3. Leverage MDC's reputation and convening power for maximum impact

- Foster a culture of innovation, which will increase MDC's visibility and impact
- Develop a strategy to increase MDC's presence across its service footprint with partnerships and philanthropy in each state
- Continue to convene the best and brightest minds to develop strategies to systemically lift those on the margin



*Report on MDC's work in Danville, VA
(click image to access)*

4. Update the marketing/communications strategy

- Leverage social media to expand MDC's presence with all relevant stakeholders, current and potential
- Streamline MDC's messaging to drive consistency and elevate the impact of the work

5. Inspire the people and manage the business

- Drive accountability and results with an empowered staff, clear goals, and responsibilities that align the entire organization with agreed-upon objectives, freeing the CEO for substantial external engagement
- Ensure ongoing programmatic excellence and rigorous program evaluation
- Foster unflinching values of equity, mutual respect and diversity as an organizational and societal strength
- Ensure efficient operations and organizational effectiveness through sound fiscal practices, attention to internal resource allocation and the highest legal, ethical, and professional standards throughout MDC.

THE RELATIONSHIPS

CEO reports to	<u>The Board of Directors</u>
And manages a <u>staff</u> of ~25 through	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Three Senior Program Directors, respectively focused on<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ Family Economic Success◦ Place-based initiatives◦ Program design, fund development, and management of MDC's talent development portfolio• Chief Financial Officer
While stewarding other important relationships, such as	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <u>Funders and partners</u>• Influencers and thought-leaders, regionally and nationally, in fields relevant to MDC's work

THE CANDIDATE

The President's leadership will engender renewed bold, clear direction. S/he will have demonstrated passion for the work of MDC, knowledge of the systemic challenges of the South and experience in leading and growing organizations to provide sustainable impact.

The most appealing contenders will be able to demonstrate and leverage

- Commitment to building economic mobility and racial equity
- Strong existing relationships with foundations and the facility for attracting the resources to support an ambitious strategy
- Core competency in systems change, capacity building, strategy consulting and/or organizational development
- Proven success in managing complex engagements and transactions involving multiple partners not always aligned in their immediate goals or definitions of success
- Respect for the power of data and the individual lives and life experiences that data represent

- An engaged and engaging manner informed by a commitment to developing and delivering the mechanisms that lead to true equity and inclusion for those on the margin of society
- Experience working and leading in the South
- Strong people management skills and the demonstrated ability to develop and inspire a high-powered team in a collaborative manner
- Business management skills and a proven record of delivering healthy and sustainable momentum
- Humility, authenticity and an infectious commitment to learn, adapt and grow.



THE LOCATION

MDC and its staff are located in the thriving heart of downtown [Durham, North Carolina](#), in the historic John Sprunt Hill building, of which MDC is part owner.

Durham is home to [Duke](#) and [North Carolina Central](#) universities and is part of North Carolina's economically vibrant [Research Triangle](#). It has a rich heritage in arts, culture, sports and entertainment. For example, the [Durham Performing Arts Center](#) is among the top ten US arts centers in theater ticket sales, and the [Museum of Life and Science](#) is one of North Carolina's top family destinations. Durham also boasts a dynamic dining scene and several parks that add to its appeal.



***For potential consideration or to suggest a prospect, please email
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or call Crystal Stephens, Sam Pettway or Patti Kish at
404-BoardWalk (404-262-7392).***
