

## FOR-PROFIT PRACTICES OPTIMIZE FOR-PURPOSE SECTOR

*Rustbelt native and rural southern team join forces to solve poverty*

**Waycross, Georgia and Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania:** Tucked away in rural Southeastern Georgia, bottom-of-mind for many big-name legislators and funders, lies a 29-county region on a mission. Led by Bryan Singleton, *action pact*, the organization tasked with solving poverty in this region, has a tall order to fill. With a 23% average poverty rate and median household income of \$39,000—which is less than two thirds the national median of \$59,039—*action pact*'s service area is in need of an innovative intervention.

Enter *Darwin*—a center for social impact that was founded in D.C. and is headquartered in the Renaissance Steel City of Pittsburgh with wings across the nation. *Darwin* is launching a pilot project in applied innovation to revolutionize *action pact*'s efforts and those of their peers. *Darwin* is led by Laura Kisailus, a changemaker whose career trajectory has taken her across regions, sectors, and positions on the economic ladder.

As she works to resolve gaps and inefficiencies, Kisailus laments that the government, and D.C. in general, is a bubble—an ivory tower isolated from the real streets and the rural roads of America. She's impressed with Pittsburgh and its ability to rebound and rekindle neighborhoods to make impact for their own neighbors. "I wanted to do work on both ends, so I started in the middle," Kisailus says, the "sweet spot," which is where Kisailus met *action pact*.

In 2017, Kisailus and her team completed the first phase of a two-year study of community action, America's poverty-fighting infrastructure. This research culminated in a comprehensive report, [The Hidden War: Finding Opportunity after 54 years](#), and [unpack™](#), a suite of shared strategy, branding, and tech solutions designed to increase capacity for community action. First in line for the innovation? *Action pact*.

After a revolutionary and insight-rich [strategic branding engagement](#), *Darwin* decided to invest \$45,000 of in-kind services to take the project to the next level. The new engagement is called *Independence Design*. *Darwin* and *action pact* will collaborate with local and national foundations, private companies, beneficiaries, grantors, and philanthropists to close the gap between people and systems.

By conducting inclusive and interactive research on frontlines experiences navigating services, the pilot initiative will give communities and low-income individuals not only a voice in the systems that serve them, but a role as well. The project will result in an empathetic strategic

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blueprint to reshape the experience of climbing out of poverty—informed by the people, for the people.

Convinced the pace of progress can be accelerated, Kisailus says she prides herself in assembling the sharpest minds and introducing new methods to bridge the gap between intent and outcome.

“Together,” Kisailus says, “we can strengthen frontline organizations, destigmatize poverty, rally and empower neighbors, and pave the way for exponential private investment to solve this age-old social challenge.”

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### **About Darwin**

As a [center for social impact](#), *Darwin* partners with changemakers locally, nationally, and globally to solve complex issues. In addition to a focus on poverty, *Darwin* has an [extensive portfolio](#) including transformations in public health, aging, economic development, and conservation.

[Founded by a trailblazer](#) convinced the pace of progress can be accelerated, *Darwin* assembles the sharpest minds and introduces new methods to bridge the gap between intent and outcome.

*Darwin's* management and design experts inform solutions that reframe narratives, rethink systems, maximize capacity, and modernize policy. Since 2014, the team has worked at the intersection of changemaker and policymaker to provide impact services: strategy, design, media, transformation. To date, *Darwin* has kept their promise to move society forward™ by aligning over 87,000 people, accelerating 30 missions, and impacting 9 issue areas.

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