

PARTNER SPOTLIGHT:

MATT BAUER



Matt Bauer is the CEO and co-founder of Sparrow Mobile for All, a company that seeks to create digital inclusion by connecting economically disadvantaged people in the U.S. with mobile access, services, content, programs, and opportunities.

He has worked in telecommunication companies for almost 30 years and focuses on partnerships and the crossroad of impact and business. A frequent speaker on telecom, sustainability, and the future of work, he also co-edited and authored the Nonprofit Guide to Going Green. A native of South Bend, Matt currently lives in San Francisco.

Can you describe the relationship between Sparrow and RefugeeMobile?

Sparrow is a national wireless carrier offering the buy-one give-one business model to the mobile services industry and our customers - for each customer that switches to Sparrow for their mobile services, we donate a device or month of service to someone in need. RefugeeMobile is a cross sector partnership that we developed with Lutheran Immigration Refugee Services (LIRS), Refugee Services of Texas (RST) and LEO to use mobile services, devices, and apps, coupled with big data to modernize the integration of refugees settled into the U.S.

Did research affect how you designed or implemented RefugeeMobile?

Knowing that we had a proper Institutional Review Board and research team (both provided by Notre Dame and LEO) in place allowed us to dive deep and expand the criteria and outcomes for the project. We even went so far as to develop (along with the Frugal Innovation Hub in the engineering school at Santa Clara University) an app specific to this project which provides data on how much each app is being used and allows us to link back to other metrics such as higher paying jobs and faster

integration. We are also measuring how mobile and big data can strengthen and improve the relationship between the agency on the ground and its clients.

What role does research play in reducing poverty?

Over the past 50 years, the U.S. has spent over \$22 trillion fighting the War on Poverty, with mixed results. We now stand at the dawn of a new opportunity, to use mobile/apps/big data to gather data from the field, combined with other types of data and provide detailed analysis that can better inform policy, funding and above all improve livelihoods. With these new tools and pathways, research can now include both phone generated data from the field and survey data, combined with the power of new tools such as Tableau for reporting and visualizing data in ways not possible before - and at a fraction of the cost of systems and methodologies of the past.

What is your role in the LEO research study?

In the first half of the project, I worked with LIRS and RST to take it from an idea/concept to a program on paper and find funding (the project was eventually funded by a MacArthur Discovery Grant) and then I participated in some months of program design and the subsequent launch in May of 2016. While I am still involved, my colleagues at Sparrow and Mobile for All, along with Refugee Services of Texas are managing the day-to-day of the program.

How do you anticipate LEO's research study will improve RefugeeMobile?

LEO's research is pivotal in proving out the theories of change and expectations/goals that we have set for the program, which will then allow us to expand and scale both in Texas and to other regions in the coming years. Our goal is for RefugeeMobile to become a standard practice in refugee resettlement and without the proper measurement, analysis and research that would not be possible. Funders are now requiring this component for any project that is looking to scale - LEO is providing an invaluable resource to RefugeeMobile.