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2011-0255-S

rc181

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*The Aspen Institute*  
Roundtable on Comprehensive Community Initiatives  
for Children and Families Meeting  
January 8-9, 1996  
ANA Hotel  
Washington, DC

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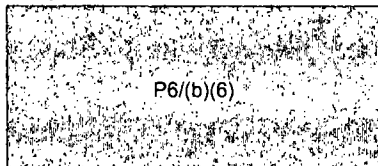
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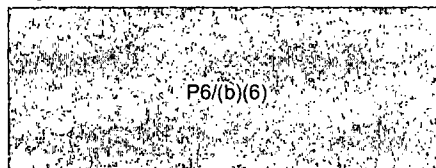
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# The Aspen Institute

**Roundtable on Comprehensive Community Initiatives  
for Children and Families**

**FAX Transmission — FAX # 212-697-2258**

To: Gaynor K. Coon

Company: \_\_\_\_\_

FAX #: (202) 456-7028

From: Anne Rubins

Date: 1/4/96

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**The Aspen Institute  
Roundtable on Comprehensive Community  
Initiatives for Children and Families  
345 East 46th Street, Suite 700  
New York, NY 10017-3562  
(212) 697-1226**



The Aspen Institute

*Roundtable on Comprehensive Community Initiatives  
for Children and Families*

**TO:** Participants in the Roundtable meeting, January 9-10, 1995

**DATE:** January 3, 1995

**FROM:** Anne C. Kubisch

**SUBJECT:** Final plans for our meeting

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At this point, it looks as though we are going to have record attendance at our Roundtable meeting next week. We have prepared three important topics for discussion, and we are pleased that so many of you will be there to participate.

We have changed the order of discussion slightly from that which we laid out in our December 20th correspondence to you. The general schedule for the meeting, including the start and end times each day, remains the same: Tuesday, January 9, 10:00 am - 6:00 pm, and Wednesday, January 10, 9:00 am - 1:00 pm. But we will begin the meeting with a report on the work of the Steering Committee on Evaluation. Then, we will turn to a discussion of the report *Voices from the Field: Learning from Comprehensive Community Initiatives* which you received in your mailing last month. As we mentioned in the mailing, we hope that this discussion will cover both the substantive content of the report as well as the implications of its findings and suggested next steps for the report. The discussion should last all afternoon on Tuesday and may even overflow into the first hour of our session on Wednesday. We will still devote the final three hours of the meeting, Wednesday 10:00 - 1:00 to race issues in comprehensive community initiatives.

Some friendly Roundtable members have suggested that only those with very long plane flights will be likely to have read the report *Voices from the Field* in its entirety before the meeting, and they recommended an annotated Table of Contents to assist those with shorter commutes. It is attached to help guide you through the report.

We look forward to seeing you at this important meeting.

# **Voices from the Field: Learning from Comprehensive Community Initiatives**

## **Table of Contents (annotated)**

### **Prologue**

**Page 2**

Background about the Roundtable and about the genesis of the report; authors and acknowledgments

### **Chapter One**

**Page 4**

#### **Comprehensive Community Initiatives: Goals, Principles and Operational Strategies**

This chapter provides a general framework for understanding CCIs (pp. 4-8). Their goals are broad and ambitious, and they aim for change at individual, neighborhood and systems levels. Two fundamental principles guide CCIs as they work toward those goals: comprehensiveness and community building. Given those goals and guiding principles, CCIs then establish a set of operational strategies (governance, funding, staffing, technical assistance, and evaluation) that enable them to develop and implement program activities. A visual model is presented on page 8.

The chapter goes on to suggest that the framework, while helpful in introducing how most CCIs are generally organized, is only a beginning point and understates the dynamic nature of CCIs. The interplay of goals, principles and operations creates certain tensions that require ongoing negotiation within a CCI. The two tensions that are discussed in-depth in the report are those between "process" and "product" and between "inside" and "outside (pp. 8-9)."

Pages 9-11 introduce the structure of the report and the terms that are used commonly throughout the report.

### **Chapter Two**

**Page 12**

#### **The Relationship between Goals and Principles: Applying Comprehensiveness and Community Building to Achieve Individual, Neighborhood and Systems Change**

This chapter introduces the interactive quality of the elements of the CCI framework, focusing on principles and goals. It first defines “comprehensiveness” in CCIs and presents the ways in which CCI actors have and have not found it to be a useful guiding principle (pp. 12-13). Community building is then defined and discussed as both a means and an end within CCIs (pp. 13-14).

The chapter then turns to a presentation of the type of change that is generally sought at the individual (pp. 14-15), neighborhood (pp. 15-16) and systems levels (pp. 16-17). At the individual and neighborhood levels, CCIs seek improvements in social, economic and other indicators, as well as enhanced “capacity.” Systems change focuses on the way that “business is done” both within the neighborhood and between the neighborhood and the outside world. Ultimately, CCIs aim to balance and promote the positive interaction between those three levels of change.

### **Chapter Three**

Page 19

#### **The Tension between Process and Product**

This chapter discusses how both process and product are central to the CCI mission. Striking and maintaining balance between them is a key challenge to CCIs. It defines the tension between process and product (pp. 19-21) and suggests that, among CCI actors, there are some who value one more strongly than the other (pp. 21-22 describe the process-product “continuum”).

The process-product tension plays out notably in the following areas: in governance (pp. 23-25) and staffing and technical assistance (pp. 25-26), where there is perceived trade-off between efficiency and participation/capacity building; in program activities (pp. 26-28), where there is a perceived trade-off between investing in services, housing, etc., and investing in community organizing and capacity building; and in evaluation (pp. 28-31), where priorities need to be set about the meaning of success and what to measure.

### **Chapter Four**

Page 32

#### **The Inside-Outside Tension**

The inside-outside tension results from the fact that CCIs are locally controlled efforts at neighborhood transformation but are catalyzed and supported by actors outside the neighborhood. In CCIs, there are various configurations of “inside” and “outside” and the dividing line between them is porous and shifts over time.

The paradigmatic inside-outside relationship is between the local initiative and the funder (pp. 33-37), where tensions can arise over very fundamental issues such as defining the overall initiative (pp. 33-35) and the meaning of success

(pp. 35-37). The inside-outside tension is also reflected in decisions surrounding and authority over technical assistance (pp. 37-39) and evaluation (pp. 39-41), both of which are generally imported from outside the neighborhood and have multiple purposes and multiple audiences. Finally, the tension plays out in CCI governance (pp. 41-45), which is where the range of CCI actors can come together to negotiate control, participation, responsibility and accountability.

## **Chapter Five**

Page 46

### **Getting Started: Findings about the Early Phases of a CCI**

While most of what can be learned about the CCI field at this point is best understood within the context of the first four chapters of the report, some operational lessons about the early phases of a CCI are drawn out in this chapter. They pertain to: how to develop program priorities (pp. 46-47); establishing the institutional base for the initiative (pp. 47-50); leadership development (pp. 50-52); funding (pp. 52-53); staffing and technical assistance (pp. 53-54); and evaluation (pp. 54-55).

## **Epilogue**

Page 56

The epilogue states that the broad conclusion that should be drawn from the report is that CCIs are defined better by *how* they work to promote individual and neighborhood well-being than by *what* they do. This conclusion suggests that neighborhood transformation may depend less on putting into place a model configuration of comprehensive neighborhood-based activities than on developing capacity at the neighborhood level to define and effect responses to local needs on a sustained basis.

## **Appendix A: Roundtable Members**

## **Appendix B: Methodology and Discussion Group Questions**

## **Appendix C: Discussion Group Participants by Peer Group**

## **Appendix D: Descriptions of Initiatives that Participated in Focus Groups**

28 10 11  
JB-A - fyi



The Aspen Institute

*Roundtable on Comprehensive Community Initiatives  
for Children and Families*

December 20, 1995

Carol Rasco  
Assistant to the President  
for Domestic Policy  
West Wing  
The White House  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Carol,

*I am not going -*

We are sorry to hear that you will be unable to attend our next Roundtable meeting. However, in the event that your plans change, we are providing you with the relevant meeting information. The meeting will begin at 10:00 am on Tuesday, January 9 and end at 1:00 pm on Wednesday, January 10. We will have an informal lunch at the end of the meeting on Wednesday, from 1:00 - 2:00 pm, for all those who wish to stay.

The meeting will be held in a conference room at the same hotel in which we met last time:

ANA Hotel  
2401 M Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20037  
Tel: 202-429-2400  
Fax: 202-457-5010

We have reserved a block of rooms at the ANA for the nights of January 8th and 9th, but you should make your own reservation. When you call the hotel, please indicate that you are part of the Aspen Roundtable group.

You may handle your travel arrangements in one of two ways. You can purchase your ticket yourself and submit a receipt to us for reimbursement following the meeting. Or, you can contact our travel agent in New York who will

be authorized to purchase a ticket for you. If you work through our agent, you will still need to submit your ticket stub/receipt after the meeting. Our travel agent is:

Sandra Berg  
Stevens Travel  
Tel.: 212-696-4300  
Fax: 212-679-5072

On Tuesday, January 9, we will spend the full day (10:00 am - 6:00 pm) discussing the enclosed report, *Voices from the Field: Learning from Comprehensive Community Initiatives*, and its implications for our work and for the field as a whole. The report was prompted by the discussion at our last Roundtable meeting (in February 1995) at which the members asked us to undertake an effort that would begin to distill lessons that are being learned collectively by the current generation of comprehensive community initiatives (CCIs). To gather the information, we organized a participatory process where small groups of 6-10 "peers" -- i.e., CCI directors, staff, evaluators, members of governance structures, and residents of CCI neighborhoods -- were brought together for a one-day session to explore the lessons they are learning about the goals, principles and operations of a CCI. The report presents the analysis and conclusions drawn from those sessions. We plan to divide our meeting on January 9th into a discussion of the contents and substantive issues raised in the report, and a discussion of the implications of the findings for the activities of the Roundtable, for the work of our individual members, and for the field as a whole.

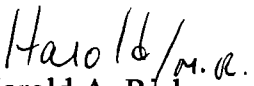
We are organizing an informal dinner on Tuesday evening for anyone who wants to participate, but you are also free to make your own plans.

We will begin Wednesday, January 10, at 9:00 am, with an update on the work of our Evaluation Committee. The Committee has been working to develop the concept of a "theories of change" approach to CCI evaluation, and a paper by James Connell and Anne Kubisch describing the general approach is enclosed for your information.

The bulk of our session on Wednesday, from 10:00 am - 1:00 pm, will be led by Angela Blackwell and will focus on the issue of race as it relates to comprehensive community change efforts. The aim of the session is to explore how racial dynamics are addressed in community initiatives and how this interaction, in turn, is influenced by both local and national contextual factors. Again, we hope that part of the discussion will focus on the implications for the work of the Roundtable.

We look forward to seeing you soon. In the meantime, best wishes for a happy holiday season.

Sincerely,

  
Harold A. Richman  
Co-Chair

  
Lisbeth B. Schorr  
Co-Chair

  
Anne C. Kubisch  
Director

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# **VOICES FROM THE FIELD**

## **LEARNING FROM COMPREHENSIVE COMMUNITY INITIATIVES**

December 1995

# PROLOGUE

## About the Roundtable

Comprehensive community initiatives (CCIs) are neighborhood-based efforts that seek improved outcomes for individuals and families as well as improvements in neighborhood conditions by working comprehensively across social, economic and physical sectors. The Roundtable on Comprehensive Community Initiatives for Children and Families of the Aspen Institute was established in 1992 as a forum in which people engaged in the field of CCIs—including foundation sponsors, directors, technical assistance providers, evaluators, and public sector officials—can meet to discuss the lessons that are being learned by initiatives across the country and to work on common problems that they are facing. (A list of Roundtable members is included as Appendix A.)

In addition to the project that has resulted in this report, the Roundtable is examining a range of specific issues that are critical to the CCI field. For example, to address the challenges associated with evaluating CCIs, the Roundtable regularly convenes a Steering Committee on Evaluation. The first phase of that Committee's work is presented in *New Approaches to Evaluating Community Initiatives: Concepts, Methods, and Contexts*, edited by James P. Connell, Anne C. Kubisch, Lisbeth B. Schorr and Carol H. Weiss, published by the Aspen Institute early in 1995.

## About this report

At their meeting in February 1995, Roundtable members pointed to the need to systematically distill the experiences of the current generation of CCIs in order to: (a) inform work on important cross-cutting issues that are at the forefront of the CCI field, such as comprehensiveness of program, community building, and related operational challenges; (b) suggest next steps to enhance the effectiveness of currently operating CCIs; (c) guide new program architects and implementers; and (d) define a research agenda for further learning and application.

In responding to this charge, the Co-Chairs and staff of the Roundtable designed a participatory process with the aim of eliciting the observations of fellow actors in the CCI field and producing an analytical portrait of CCIs that could be of use to a number of audiences. Over the course of a two-month period, June - July 1995, the Roundtable sponsored eleven focus group discussions among 6-11 peers—defined as those occupying similar positions—in the CCI field, including foundation representatives, initiative directors and staff, evaluators, members of the governance structures of local initiatives, residents of the neighborhoods in which CCIs are taking place, and other experts and observers of the field. By the end of the process, ninety-four individuals participated in the day-long structured discussion sessions, which were taped, transcribed, and analyzed for presentation in this report. (Further discussion of the methodology that was used and a list of the participants in the focus group sessions can be found in Appendices B and C.)

As suggested by its title, *Voices from the Field*, the aim of this report is to explore and capture the wisdom of those who are actively engaged in CCIs today. The hope is that it will have resonance for them and for all who are committed to similar goals.

## **Authors and acknowledgments**

This very substantial and rapidly accomplished effort was superbly led by Anne Kubisch, Director of the Roundtable. She was joined by six people and the team worked together throughout all stages of the project: defining the scope of work, conducting the focus group sessions, analyzing the data, identifying the key messages that the data suggested, and writing the report. Three of the team members are Roundtable staff, three are staff of the Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago, and one belongs to both institutions. They are listed below:

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- Harold Richman, Roundtable Co-chair and Director of Chapin Hall
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The authors are solely responsible for the accuracy of the statements and the interpretations contained within this report. The interpretations do not necessarily reflect the views of the sponsoring foundations or of the federal government.

Finally, and most important of all, we thank the ninety-four people who participated in the peer group discussions and shared their experiences and wisdom with us. We hope that they find their "voices" represented here.

### ***Harold Richman, Roundtable Co-Chair***

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## **CHAPTER ONE:**

### **COMPREHENSIVE COMMUNITY INITIATIVES: GOALS, PRINCIPLES, AND OPERATIONAL STRATEGIES**

In recent years, funders, program architects, and policy makers have been exploring a range of approaches to revitalizing distressed neighborhoods. One important branch of these efforts is known in the field as “comprehensive community initiatives,” or CCIs. Beginning with a handful of nascent initiatives in the late 1980s, foundation-funded CCIs now number upwards of two dozen. Government is also increasingly involved in comparable efforts, including the federal Empowerment Zones and a variety of city- and state-driven initiatives. This growing number of similar endeavors suggests that the principles that underlie CCIs will continue to guide many aspects of the current and future anti-poverty activities.

The CCI movement is, in part, a reaction against immediate past practice in the social welfare and economic development fields and, in part, a reformulation of earlier approaches. As a reaction against past practice, the CCI approach seeks to replace piecemeal, categorical approaches with “comprehensive” efforts that cross sectoral and programmatic boundaries and attempt to build on the interconnections among economic, social, and physical needs, opportunities, and circumstances. As a reformulation of earlier approaches, CCIs build on the conceptual foundations of community development theory and practice, represented by both private and public sector efforts such as the Gray Areas Program, the Community Development Corporation movement, and the Community Action Program. They employ the lessons from that experience not so much as a “model” for action but as a set of basic guiding concepts—including comprehensiveness, coordination, collaboration, and community participation—and then use a wide range of organizational approaches and programmatic strategies to achieve positive change.

While the individual efforts that constitute the field of comprehensive community-based initiatives differ significantly in program and structure, they hold in common a set of fundamental *goals*, are guided by adherence to a shared set of general *principles*, and encounter similar *operational* needs and challenges. To understand the CCI phenomenon and glean lessons from experience in the field so far, it is useful to explore these three dimensions of the initiatives.

### **GOALS, PRINCIPLES, AND OPERATIONAL STRATEGIES**

#### **Fundamental Goals of CCIs**

Comprehensive, community-based initiatives are defined in part by the ambitious goals they set for themselves. These goals go well beyond the remediation of particular problems, such as teenage pregnancy or insufficient income, and the development of particular assets, such as housing stock or new social services. CCIs attempt instead to foster a fundamental transformation of poor neighborhoods and of the circumstances and opportunities of individuals and families who live there. They seek to catalyze a process of change that is grounded in local life and priorities but also draws upon and incorporates knowledge and resources from outside the neighborhood, that addresses the needs and development of individuals, families, and organizations within the neighborhood in a sustained way, and that changes the nature of the relationship between the neighborhood and the systems outside its boundaries. Beyond these general goals, however, the specific dimensions of neighborhood transformation sought by CCIs are often left undefined at their inception and are meant to be identified and addressed by the participants through an ongoing process of planning and implementation.

CCIs can be seen to target change not only across the three principal sectors of interest--social, physical, and economic--but also at three levels. At the *individual level*, CCIs seek to build capacity, increase access to opportunity, and improve the quality of life of individual residents and their families. At the *neighborhood level*, CCIs are concerned with the accessibility and quality of social support, economic opportunity, and physical infrastructure. This generally means building the capacity of existing local institutions responsible for these aspects of neighborhood life, or supporting the creation of new organizations to do so. CCIs are also concerned with the qualities of collective life provided by or through community attributes such as the extent and nature of personal networks, "social capital," and a "sense of community." At the broader *systems level*, CCIs seek to improve the responsiveness and quality of services and facilities provided by systems beyond the neighborhood (including such inputs as social services, schools, commercial activity, and private-sector investment) and to increase access for neighborhood residents to the structure of opportunity that exists at the municipal or regional level.

### Central principles

CCIs hold in common a set of conceptual and operational principles that guide their creation and unfolding. The two central principles, under which other basic convictions are subsumed, are *comprehensiveness* and *community building*.

**Comprehensiveness.** The principle of comprehensiveness addresses the full range of needs, circumstances, opportunities, and constraints of individuals and families living in impoverished neighborhoods and on the relationships among them. These relationships argue against categorical approaches that focus on individual problems or opportunities in isolation from other facets of life. A focus on the creation of jobs in a given neighborhood, for example, without taking into account residents' educational circumstances, or their need for social supports such as child care, transportation, and training, would be limited both in vision and in potential benefits. The principle of comprehensiveness calls for constant consideration of systemic connections among issues.

Thus, most CCIs include attention to the following in their goal statements, if not yet in action, and aim to achieve synergy among them:

*Expansion and improvement of social services:* This might include filling service gaps that exist in the neighborhood, co-locating and integrating various social services, or promoting a developmental rather than remedial social services agenda.

*Education and training:* This might include school reform, job training and placement, or leadership development.

*Economic development:* This might include working with financial institutions to ensure that Community Reinvestment Act funds are targeted to the neighborhood, providing revolving loan funds and technical assistance for small business development, or providing capital for new neighborhood development projects.

*Physical revitalization:* This might include working with a local CDC, the public housing agency or other private sector investors.

*Quality-of-life activities:* This might include working with the local police on neighborhood safety, establishing community gardens, developing new recreation centers, or promoting community cultural celebrations.

The charge to think comprehensively also entails negotiating a balance among individual-, neighborhood-, and systems-level change. Since CCIs seek to create change that is holistic and sustainable, they seek both to improve the lives of individual residents *and* the quality of life provided by the neighborhood as a whole, each of which is influenced by the actions and reactions of systems beyond the neighborhood.

**Community building.** The second central principle that guides CCIs is *community building*, which is explicitly stated in the charge of most initiatives and implicit in both the mission and approach of all CCIs. Fundamentally, community building concerns strengthening the capacity of neighborhood residents, associations, and organizations to work, individually and collectively, to foster and sustain positive neighborhood change. For individuals, community building focuses on both the capacity and “empowerment” of neighborhood residents to identify and access opportunities and effect change, as well as on the development of individual leadership. For associations, community building focuses on the nature, strength, and scope of relationships (both affective and instrumental) among individuals within the neighborhood and, through them, connections to networks of association beyond the neighborhood. These are ties through kinship, acquaintance or other more formal means through which information, resources, and assistance can be received and delivered. Finally, for organizations, community building centers on developing the capacity of formal and informal institutions within the neighborhood to provide goods and services effectively, and on the relationships among organizations both within and beyond the neighborhood to maximize resources and coordinate strategies.

## **Operational Strategies**

To translate these principles into action that can create and sustain broad neighborhood change, CCIs make strategic choices that are reflected in their structures and operations. These operational strategies are manifest in various aspects of CCIs, including governance, funding, staffing, technical assistance, evaluation, and program development.

**Governance.** Governance in CCIs is, in many ways, the key operational issue and the one through which the other operating strategies are negotiated and played out. It concerns the creation of mechanisms to guide planning, decision making, and implementation, as well as to locate accountability and responsibility for action undertaken. Governance is thus both process and structure: it attempts to structure action based on the central principles of comprehensiveness and community building through the organized engagement of a range of participants both within and beyond the target neighborhood.

Because the change strategies represented by CCIs are formulated as *initiatives* that seek to engage in comprehensive, coordinated action, the functions of governance--participation, planning, decision making, oversight, implementation--tend to be formalized. This may take shape in a nonprofit newly created for the purpose of initiative governance. Alternatively, the governance function may be assumed by a less formal collaboration among individuals or among institutions, or both; such collaborations may operate independently or be allied with an established organization. Almost invariably, however, these initiative governance structures are designed to include in their membership a diverse body of “stakeholders,” including neighborhood residents, local business owners, representatives of various community-based organizations, members of public-sector agencies including city government officials, and members of the private and nonprofit sectors in the broader community.

In this way, CCIs attempt to operationalize the principles of comprehensiveness and community building in part through their structure. Comprehensiveness is approached in part by assembling a wide range of participants with different experiences, different fields of expertise, and different access to resources who, through interaction and common endeavor, might challenge and revise categorical thinking. Similarly, the process of community building is to be in part accomplished by initiative governance through the participation of neighborhood residents, entrepreneurs, and other “stakeholders.” Often, there are several layers of governance that structure the roles of local and nonlocal participants, including funders, staff, technical assistance providers and consultants, and evaluators.

**Funding.** CCIs are generally foundation-sponsored initiatives. Grant funds are meant to be flexible and responsive to the priorities established by the local governance structure. Generally, however, CCI funds are not used to cover ongoing program costs, but are used instead for planning and management, capacity building, seed funding for new activities, and the like. Thus, CCI funds are not meant to replace major public sector funding streams, covering core services such as education and safety, or private sector investment in the neighborhood, but rather to help ensure that those dollars are used as effectively as possible. Indeed, one purpose of CCI funding is to leverage increased financial flows into the neighborhood by helping to ensure better returns on new investments.

**Staffing.** Most initiatives rely to a large extent on a single staff person who, as project director or coordinator, facilitates the planning process and takes responsibility for moving from planning to action. In some CCIs, additional staff provide administrative assistance or direct component tasks, such as community organizing or specific projects. The staff may be located in a “neutral” organization, such as a local intermediary or a community foundation, in a newly created organization or collaborative structure, or in a specially created slot within an existing neighborhood entity. Regardless of where the staff member is based, s/he is generally accountable to the wide range of CCI stakeholders.

**Technical assistance.** The provision of technical assistance in CCIs takes several forms and is meant to serve several functions. Technical assistance may be provided centrally by a funder to the organization responsible for initiative planning and implementation, or it may be sought by the central organizational actor in an initiative or some portion of the participants. It may be furnished by one or multiple providers around process issues (such as governance, board development, strategic planning) or around programmatic issues (such as service provision, land use, financial instruments). Technical assistance may be used as supplemental staff to get concrete work done or be used to promote long-term capacity building by focusing on the transference of skills and knowledge to neighborhood residents or organizations. These choices may support or complicate adherence to the principles that guide CCIs, and may have a significant impact on the structure, processes, and outcomes of a given initiative.

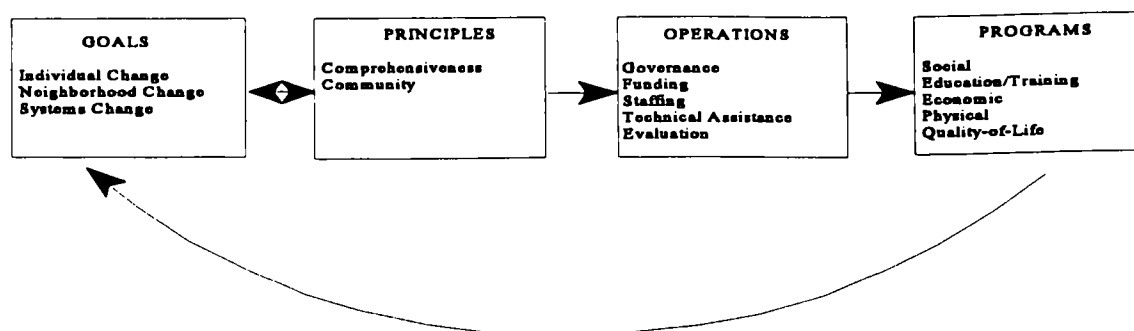
**Evaluation.** Evaluation serves several functions in CCIs and can be used by several audiences. Evaluation can be formative, providing ongoing feedback to initiative participants at one or more levels, such as funders, staff, or governance participants. It can be more summative, seeking to provide evidence of ultimate or periodic progress after a given period of time. Evaluation may be provided--or imposed--by funders or sought out by local participants; it may work with or apart from other institutional support components like staff, technical assistance, funding; it may engage participants to varying degrees in the design, implementation, and analysis. As with technical assistance, these choices will relate differently to the principles that guide CCIs, and they may affect both ongoing implementation of and ultimate learning from a given initiative.

## Program development

Given the broad goals of CCIs and the broadly stated principles of comprehensiveness and community building, the scope, direction, and intent of programs developed under the initiatives are virtually unconstrained. They often cover a wide range of functional areas and seek a wide range of outcomes. The set of programmatic choices made by a CCI are less inclined to comprise a coherent approach in themselves than to enhance, build on, and support programmatic activity already in existence. Thus, programmatically, CCIs seek to fill gaps, connect resources and approaches, build infrastructure, and organize constituent elements of the communities in which they work. In this way, CCI are less defined by *what* they do than by *how* they attempt to do it, through a combination of planning, convening, coordinating, funding, organizing, advocating, and direct implementation.

### The interplay of goals, principles and operations: Understanding the dynamics of CCIs and the tensions they create

The goals, principles, and operational elements of CCIs described above are interconnected (see Figure 1). The broad CCI goal of neighborhood transformation, through individual, neighborhood, and system change, both informs and is informed by the core principles of comprehensiveness and community building. These principles are enacted through a variety of strategies and structures--including governance, funding, staffing, technical assistance, and evaluation. These operational components in turn spearhead or support the development and implementation of particular programmatic approaches and the monitoring of their impact.



The abstract model, visualized here, that guides the analysis in this report provides a way to categorize the tangled on-the-ground implementation and operational dynamics of local initiatives. But how the initiative actually unfolds will, of course, be the result of how the involved actors--including funders, directors and staff, residents and other stakeholders--define and enact the goals, principles and other component parts of the model.

Understanding these dynamics and how they are playing out is critical to understanding the CCI phenomenon and to learning lessons from experience in the field thus far. CCIs bring together an intentionally broad range of participants within the constraints of an initiative structure and ask them to develop programs in accordance with a set of general principles. While the principles are shared, individual participant perspectives about the interpretations of the principles in action often differ greatly, and may sometimes be in opposition, creating tensions within the initiatives. Such tensions exist in other contexts, but they are heightened in the CCI context because of CCIs' particular commitment to the two principles of comprehensiveness and community-building--it is the interplay between these principles

and their translation to action that makes CCIs so complex and challenging. In this analysis of the CCI phenomenon, two central tensions are introduced and examined in depth: the tension between “process” and “product” and the tension between “inside” and “outside”.

The process/product tension, concerning the ongoing need to negotiate between means and ends, is a central by-product of the community-building agenda. On the one hand, CCIs are process-driven. They seek to catalyze and support the creation of mechanisms to sustain a process of decision making, capacity building, and implementation rooted in the needs, circumstances, and priorities of neighborhood residents and other “stakeholders.” On the other hand, CCIs seek to promote broad and measurable changes in the quality of life of neighborhoods and their residents. A balance needs to be struck between these two objectives, and where aims are competing they need to be negotiated.

The inside/outside tension is fundamentally about relationships. In many ways, the tension is defined by the fact that CCIs are construed as locally driven, locally controlled efforts at neighborhood transformation, while they are at the same time catalyzed, supported, guided, monitored, and studied by actors and institutions beyond the neighborhood. It is also fundamentally about power and authority--about who makes what decisions, when and how. The relationship between the funder of a CCI, and often by extension the technical assistance provider and evaluator, and the neighborhood in which it seeks to support change is paradigmatic of the inside/outside tension. It is not, however, the only relationship that exemplifies it. In CCIs, there are many insides and many outsides, and the boundaries that define them often shift according to shifting circumstances and perspectives. In the operation of CCIs any of a number of participants may at one point or another be seen by some as “outside” to their “inside.” The tension is thus not just about power, but about legitimacy, accountability, representation, and respect.

These tensions are inherent in the nature of CCIs. However, they are neither inherently destructive nor necessarily open to clear resolution. They may be creative or debilitating. When they are successfully negotiated by the participants in an ongoing give-and-take, however, they may support a dialectical process in which interaction between poles--process and product, or inside and outside--enriches planning and implementation and guides the CCI toward its long term goals.

## **A GUIDE TO READING THIS REPORT**

In the series of peer group discussions that informed this report, participants were asked to consider their experiences within the categories that are suggested by the framework presented in the figure above. Thus, the “data” were collected so as to address lessons about CCI goals, principles, operational strategies and programs. In analyzing the data, however, it became apparent that a simple reporting of the observations of actors within these static categories would understate the complexity of the CCI phenomenon and would do a disservice to the depth of knowledge that is being generated through CCIs about how to promote significant and lasting change in poor neighborhoods. It is the dynamics of CCIs that are important to understand, that is, the interplay among goals, principles, operations and programs.

Chapter Two explores how the core principles of comprehensiveness and community building interact with the CCI goals of individual, neighborhood and systems change. On the one hand, ambitious CCI goals for change can best be achieved by enacting the principles of comprehensiveness and community building. On the other hand, the centrality of principles affects the way the goals themselves are defined. The chapter attempts to define and clarify this dynamic.

Chapters Three and Four focus on the two central tensions of process-product and inside-outside, respectively. Many of the operational lessons to be learned from CCIs at this point can be understood in terms of, or as reflections of, the two tensions. They inform intent, interaction, and interpretation. These can be seen in the relationships among stakeholders (funders, governance members, local organizations, residents, evaluators, technical assistance providers, intermediaries), in the processes of strategic planning and project implementation, and in the identification of goals and the monitoring of progress toward particular objectives. While there are discrete, practical lessons to be learned from the experience of CCIs regarding their structure, conduct, and potential, to focus solely on these lessons without an understanding of the fundamental tensions that affect them is insufficient for understanding the nature of CCIs and of limited value in applying such lessons to practice.

Operational findings and lessons are also limited because of the relative newness of the CCI field. Even the most long-standing CCIs have been in place for barely five years, and most are much younger. Therefore, any “lessons” that may emerge from the analysis of the tensions in Chapters Three and Four tend to describe only the start-up phases of a CCI. Chapter Five summarizes these early findings.

## DEFINITIONS OF TERMS

In the discussion that follows we use a number of terms that are widely employed in the field, but often with a variety of meanings. For the sake of clarity, we define following terms as noted:

**CCI participants:** Individuals who are *directly* involved with the implementation of a given initiative, including members of the governance structure, staff, and neighborhood residents, but *not* including funders, evaluators, technical assistance providers, and consultants

**Initiative:** A local, single-site CCI (or the local manifestation of a multi-site CCI)

**Neighborhood:** A geographically defined portion of a larger municipality that provides the target area of a CCI

**Community:** The networks of affective and instrumental connections that link individuals and organizations to the neighborhood as “stakeholders”

**Community building:** The process of improving the quality of life in a neighborhood by strengthening the capacity of neighborhood residents, associations, and organizations to identify priorities and opportunities and to work, individually and collectively, to foster and sustain positive neighborhood change

**Neighborhood change:** The goal sought by CCIs, including the (1) increased capacity, access to opportunity, and quality of life of individuals and families; (2) improvement of the existence, accessibility, and quality of facilities, services, opportunities, and circumstances within the neighborhood; and (3) increased responsiveness and quality of services, facilities, investments, and opportunities provided by systems beyond the neighborhood

**Funder:** The initiative's sponsor or convenor; the term funder was chosen because it is widely used and because it highlights the critical influence of money in initiative relationships

**Stakeholders:** Individuals and organizations defined by an initiative as having a direct interest in the well-being of the neighborhood

**Systems:** The institutions and structural influences beyond the neighborhood that define the broader environment of which the neighborhood and initiative are a part, e.g., the government (at the municipal, county, state, and national levels); the provision of services (at various levels and through the activities of providers in different sectors); the economy (local, regional, national) including the policies and practices of economic actors beyond the neighborhood that affect it

#### **A note on the use of quotations**

The learning presented in this report is synthesized from the experiences, perceptions, and convictions of a broad range of participants in the field. Direct quotes are used frequently, and should be understood as illustrative of the general sentiment regarding an issue unless otherwise noted. We identify the peer group from which a respondent speaks only in cases where that information is particularly relevant to understanding its implications.

## **CHAPTER TWO:**

### **THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN GOALS AND PRINCIPLES: APPLYING COMPREHENSIVENESS AND COMMUNITY BUILDING TO ACHIEVE INDIVIDUAL, NEIGHBORHOOD AND SYSTEMS CHANGE**

The goals and principles of CCIs interact. From one perspective, achieving the breadth of change at the individual, neighborhood and systems levels to which CCIs aspire requires a comprehensive vision and a community building orientation. At the same time, the initiatives' adherence to the principles of comprehensiveness and community building affects how the goals of CCIs are themselves defined. This chapter examines how comprehensiveness and community building are being operationalized and demonstrates how they work together to promote change at the three CCI target levels: individual, neighborhood, and systems.

#### **UNDERSTANDING COMPREHENSIVENESS AND COMMUNITY BUILDING**

##### **Comprehensiveness**

CCIs view communities comprehensively. This perspective is operationalized along two different dimensions: (1) across sectors--physical, economic, and social and (2) across levels--individual, neighborhood, and systems. To achieve their aim of broad neighborhood change, CCIs work both to exploit the interdependence among sectors and to link change at different levels.

There are a number of ways to consider operationalizing the principle of comprehensiveness. One way is to build a comprehensive, multi-sectoral neighborhood development plan with an array of discrete activities, each focusing primarily on a key social, physical, or economic issue. A second is to develop CCI activities that address a combination of economic, physical, and social needs simultaneously, with comprehensiveness achieved within individual activities as well as across the full set of activities. For example, a home repair project might employ residents, train youth in construction skills, construct spaces for family day care to be launched, rehabilitate crack houses in the neighborhood, offer loans to induce young working families to move into the neighborhood, and so on. A third way to operationalize the principle of comprehensiveness is to think comprehensively across levels--individual, neighborhood, and systems. Taking this approach, a new family resource center might be established to provide much-needed new services to individuals, offer new space for neighborhood networking activities, and act as a pilot site for the city looking to test different configurations of co-located services.

While these perspectives on comprehensiveness may have guided initial thinking about CCIs, recent experience in the initiatives seems to suggest that the principle, defined to include all three sectors and all three levels, has not proven a useful guide for action. Comprehensiveness is a difficult concept to operationalize for a variety of reasons, including practical considerations such as the constraints in staffing and resources faced by CCIs. As one participant in the peer group discussions describes:

While we use the phrase, comprehensive community initiatives, if you use a dictionary definition of comprehensive, which I didn't look up, but I assume it means something like all-inclusive, everything, something like that--none of these initiatives can possibly be comprehensive at the community level, with [the resources that they have available]. Neighborhoods are such complex institutions and a foundation-funded intervention, even

with a lot of leveraging, can make an important difference. But is it really comprehensive? I'm increasingly wondering.

Moreover, the notion can be paralyzing: addressing the full spectrum of needs and circumstances at once is an impossible task, and the freedom to do everything does not help clarify the basis for making strategic choices. As one evaluator points out, comprehensiveness may represent an overreaction to the failure of categorical approaches and, while a broad, permissive vision avoids placing narrow limitations on an initiative, it also gives little guidance as to what an initiative *will* accomplish.

It is important for people as they envision new and different ways of combining actions and groups of people and institutions to somehow not lose--to demand of themselves--a level of clarity about both what is being done and the impact it will have on people's lives as early as possible. The vision is very seductive.

Although the notion of comprehensiveness may not have proven useful in moving the initiatives to "produce" in the short term, most of the discussion group participants support the articulation of a comprehensive vision if it is understood simply as an "ideal" or a "developmental process"--a way to guide the process and frame the long-term objectives of the initiative. Thus, comprehensiveness is better and most usefully understood as "permissiveness: a lens that allows you the freedom to pick strategically for community-building purposes." That is, it provides freedom from categorical constraints and permission to pursue a range of strategies and to take advantage of a range of available opportunities. Understood as the "absence of limitations," therefore, comprehensiveness allows initiative stakeholders to develop their own vision of what is needed in their community.

The charge to be comprehensive in developing an array of programs to effect positive, sustainable neighborhood change exemplifies a basic difficulty in bridging idea and reality, conceptualization and implementation. The principle of comprehensiveness, when translated into action through program development, provides both the possibility of creative engagement and the difficulties of making such engagement operational. There are conditions that facilitate meaningful implementation of comprehensive strategies, including a funding base that supports comprehensive activity, the local capacity to move away from categorical planning and implementation, the technical support to aid the building of linkages across projects, the development of a strategic plan, and the choice of a clear starting point. (See discussion in Chapter Five on developing program priorities.) Understood as a long-term developmental process that puts these conditions in place, comprehensiveness can be seen as a core principle for building the necessary capacity to promote sustainable change over the course of an initiative.

## **Community building**

CCIs are as much about *how* neighborhood transformation occurs as they are about putting into place a comprehensive set of programs that hold the promise of producing that change. They can be effective vehicles for strengthening capacity in the three areas--among residents, among neighborhood associations and networks, and among formal institutions--that are necessary to the community building process.

Within CCIs, community building is seen as both means and end. Building resident, associational and institutional capacities and better connecting these strengthened components of community to each other is seen as both a process for engendering neighborhood transformation and as an ultimate product. It is the "built community", with increased capacity on all three dimensions and

enhanced connections among them, that can sustain change within the neighborhood and effect change in the systems beyond the neighborhood that have an impact on the life of its residents. CCIs, therefore, are distinct from other reform efforts, such as services integration, that target neighborhood residents as *beneficiaries* or *clients*, in that they view residents and the local institutions as *agents of change*. In the words of one respondent:

What we're talking about . . . is the long-term agenda of building the capacity in these communities to take on whatever agenda pops up. . . . We're talking about trying to get to the point where you really have a group that is accountable, or a group of groups that are accountable, to people in the neighborhood, that can really run with an agenda and have results that benefit people. . . . It's building that ability of a community to set a vision and go for opportunities and actually produce results. That's what community building is.

## **APPLYING THE PRINCIPLES TO INDIVIDUAL, NEIGHBORHOOD AND SYSTEMS CHANGE**

The following section examines how CCIs employ the two principles of comprehensiveness and community building in their efforts to achieve individual, neighborhood and systems change. It examines the three levels of change independently and then examines the relationships among them.

### **Individual-Level Change**

Much of what CCIs actually do is targeted at individuals: education and training, service provision and support, and leadership development are all strategies aimed primarily at changing individuals. While all of these involve an investment in “human capital” in one form or another, CCIs may characterize these activities in quite different ways. The following are illustrative of the stated goals of CCIs regarding individual-level change:

- Empower people by providing activities that enhance their physical, spiritual, educational and psychological well-being
- Create a network of services that present opportunities for youth and adults to become prepared for work; these include high quality education, basic skills or occupational training, family supports, counseling for personal issues that may pose obstacles to working, etc.
- Identify resident skills and capacities through a community-wide asset survey and develop programs to enhance these indigenous strengths
- Help residents gain the knowledge and skills to navigate more effectively the larger systems affecting their lives
- Develop a cadre of leaders to carry out ongoing visioning, planning and implementing of initiatives

These strategies aim to increase an individual's skills, identify and enhance existing capacities, change attitudes and values and/or build motivation. Participants make a general distinction between providing individuals with particular technical skills that may help them to build new housing, manage a

family support center, or even run a meeting, and the personal, political or "process" skills that enable people to motivate and lead their peers. CCI participants recognize that their neighborhoods need both types of individual development, and deliberately build both into the agenda. For example, because the CCI philosophy makes an explicit link between individual and neighborhood transformation, considerable energy is devoted to leadership development. This is a particular priority for CCI participants who are residents or otherwise very close to the neighborhood. As one CCI staff person who is also a resident explains: "I hope not to be doing this ten years from now. I hope somebody else sits there, who's maybe 15 or 20 years old now, who can sit up and say, 'Hey, we're taking this vision to an even higher level.'"

### **Neighborhood-Level Change**

While CCIs aim to improve neighborhood-level social, physical, and economic indicators, their strategies for doing so generally focus on the following kinds of investment at the neighborhood level: building the institutional infrastructure of the neighborhood; building "social capital;" building a "culture of civic responsibility;" and building the neighborhood's capacity to handle conflict, solve problems, and/or express its voice and represent its interests in the larger economic and political arena. By definition, these are qualities of neighborhoods, and the unit of analysis is the collective, not the individual. As one director comments,

I really resonate toward the relationships, the new relationships that are built. I asked the residents who sit around the steering committee table every time we meet, "How many new people did you talk to about this neighborhood plan since last time we met?" That's something to measure. There's where you're beginning to get people talking about neighborhood revitalization and what they can contribute to that process. [Normally] people don't talk to each other. That's one of the critical things that should be measured . . . Because sometimes I think that it's more important than what you do. You need to do something, whether it's build a fence or get rid of illegal dumping. You can do leadership development, you can do technical assistance, you can do a whole lot of research and study . . . around what you do, but it's those relationships that are going to last. And it's that information that you share with others that's going to be transferred and cycled back and forth again and again. I think that's real important.

All CCI participants, in one way or another, emphasize that creating connections among people and among institutions is the core theme of their efforts. As one evaluator explains, CCIs are "not about solving any particular problems like child care or drugs or whatever, but about generalized problem solving capability, which to me implies a collection of people . . . and an ability to reach out to the outside." Similarly, a CCI governance member emphasizes the importance of a neighborhood's social networks:

So when we talk about community building, one level that I see is that we have created this very tangled network now of our church network and our nonprofit network. And it's kind of like these strings that go all across the neighborhood. And everybody in our neighborhood is somehow connected to one of those strings that are hanging down.

At the same time, a new CCI needs to recognize and respect the neighborhood networks that are in place. CCIs are not operating in virgin territory, and in any neighborhood there will be a number of existing organizations, many of which will have participated in one or another poverty alleviation or community development initiative in the past. In part because of their foundation or other high profile

sponsors, CCIs can too easily fail to involve key local actors. Several CCIs can describe mistakes that they made on this front, the tensions that they created, and the complicated backtracking that they had to do to make up for their mistakes.

Social-organizational change at the neighborhood level can play a mediating function between individual- and systems-level change. For example, the existence of shared values and “social capital” in the neighborhood affect and are affected by individual- and systems-level change. One participant reports that his collaborative started screening projects at all levels for the potential to set in motion something that strengthens “social capital” and “civic participation.” Neighborhood-level change of this type is an end in itself, but it may also improve individual lives, as illustrated in this comment:

We think there is something about the overall set of values that's out there in the street and in the community that also has an effect on whether people become teenage parents, whether they get a job, whether they have a work ethic. A lot of things of that kind are a collective value, and that's one of the things that community building is about . . . Are there block parties? Do people come out for meetings? Is it safe to go out on the street?

Do people help each other with things? These in my lexicon have an intrinsic validity to them and are part of what community is about. At the same time we think that they also may pay off in people's individual outcomes as well.

### **Systems-Level Change**

While CCIs tend to speak at least in general terms about “changing the way business is done” and stimulating fundamental change both within the neighborhood and between the neighborhood and the larger political and social environment, they differ significantly in the role they take on regarding change at the systems level. Some describe systems change as the necessary primary focus for CCIs:

Is this about replacing the current system? Or building more on top of it, and taking the current system as given but insufficient? Those are two very different political and fiscal strategies. Community building and much of the rest of what we talk about in CCIs hasn't yet been clear enough about which of these or what mix of these strategies it's about. It says institutional change, and then sets up a set of institutions that often don't engage the structures of power where the 12 million people in state and local government work and where we spend a trillion dollars. So I think if community building ducks those critical questions, then it's a “feel good” strategy . . . . You kind of have to buy it on faith, and it doesn't stand up except as a way of invoking good feelings.

Unless such systems as schools and policing and the structure of economic opportunity operate in new ways in distressed neighborhoods, few believe that sustainable transformation is possible. But some feel that systems change is “too much of a burden for CCIs,” and that they are being set up to fail if systems change becomes the major criterion for success. Systems change, in this view, should be the long-term consequence of neighborhood transformation, not its driving objective:

We can have systems change and planning and process at any level you choose, but ultimately, if you can't deliver it at the local level in the neighborhoods to individuals, all the rest is worthless. And so the emphasis to me, the focus has to be on building capacity at the neighborhood level, if it isn't there, and nurturing it if it is there. And then the other levels will take care of themselves as that bubbles up. Systems and programs [will] change . . . incrementally over time in response to real issues and real

programs and real people that are taking place at the local level. I think the effort to come in from above in an abstract way and say "we need to change the system" simply leads to meetings and papers and not much real change down at the local level.

Others note that neighborhood-driven initiatives are not well-positioned to bring about systems change:

These initiatives shouldn't *do* systems change but they should surface the key reforms that need to be done to the system, so that those who are placed to promote them have grounded information about what should be done.

At the extremes, the debate is reflected in the following statements: "Change insulated from the 'systems downtown' is nothing but therapy" versus "Systems changes that are not owned and driven by the neighborhood will have little impact on daily life in the neighborhood."

### **Linking the three levels of change**

Developing and implementing a revitalization effort that links individual, neighborhood and systems change raises a number of unanswered questions with which CCIs struggle regularly. Many of the questions have to do with linkages across levels. For example, do change strategies at the different levels ever conflict with each other rather than create synergy and momentum? Alternatively, how can individual, neighborhood and systems change efforts be structured to reinforce each other? Keeping salient the linkages across the individual, neighborhood, and systems levels of change can help a CCI avoid developing tunnel vision and getting stuck or focused exclusively at one level. One participant notes, for example, that there is a danger that capacity-building efforts end up being focused solely at the neighborhood level:

There are multiple levels of change needed and multiple kinds of capacities that have to be built. These include capacities in low-income neighborhoods, but they also include change in the responsiveness and access and intellect of the larger structures which those neighborhoods will need to have access to if they are to successfully achieve their goals.

And so there's a danger in framing the question too narrowly without this broader context of the system, whether the system is the health, human service or training system, or funders, or the school system, or the business/banking practices systems or some combination of all of those.

The issue may be one of timing and sequencing. One person, for example, explains that some of her constituents feel that "until you fix individual problems and do old fashioned casework, forget about the community stuff." Or, while an initiative may aim to accomplish broad changes at the system level, it may need to focus on building a local base for support and implementation. As one resident explains:

You have to hear what the community is saying. And although they may have an idea that they want to put a fence around a playground, that may not be important to you. You may be saying "My God, we have economic development problems here, we have health problems here, and all you're interested in is a fence?" Well, if we can help you get to that fence, you will see that accomplishment. And once you have that feeling that, 'hey, I gave this idea and it was successful,' then we begin to pull you in more.

As illustrative of conflict between levels, a number of participants note that individual change does not automatically lead to neighborhood change. Indeed, many are well aware of the possible

negative secondary consequences of investing primarily in individuals. Once they have the training, the personal resources or the connections outside the neighborhood to leave, many people choose to move to a "better" neighborhood. This tends to leave in the original neighborhood the most distressed families with the fewest options for mobility, increasing greatly the challenge of community building. While recognizing that individuals can and should be free to move wherever they wish, CCIs aim to bring about neighborhood level changes that increase the attractiveness of the neighborhood as a place to live in rather than move from. But too little is known about neighborhood revitalization and mobility patterns to assess the combination of individual level and neighborhood level change strategies that can maximize achievement of community-building goals.

Sometimes initiatives characterize their goals as multi-level but one level is so dominant that it limits what is possible at the other levels. An initiative primarily driven by leadership development goals may select members for its governance body who stand to benefit most from the training such participation can confer, but who may not be the best positioned to negotiate system-level change with players outside the neighborhood. Another example cited frequently by participants involves system-level change strategies that aim to be neighborhood based. Reforming and integrating such systems as welfare, employment and training, and housing requires a particular timeline, the investment of specific players, and a certain amount of broad political will at the top. These characteristics may or may not be compatible with a neighborhood-level strategy that puts a high value on resident participation and ownership. Indeed, neighborhood-based system reform efforts frequently present neighborhoods with a "reformed" system, treating the neighborhood more as an administrative entity, a place in which the reform will occur, rather than as a participant in the change process. In this case, the reforms play out in neighborhoods but they are not embraced--and are sometimes undermined--by the neighborhood residents and organizations who are the intended beneficiaries.

## **CHAPTER THREE: THE TENSION BETWEEN PROCESS AND PRODUCT**

CCIs are by nature long-term enterprises. Even if successful, it will take years, if not decades, to achieve the magnitude of improvement in outcomes for individuals and families, of neighborhood transformation, and of systems change that are the goals of these initiatives. At the same time, however, as many of the participants across the discussion groups made clear, CCIs must have something to “show” at a relatively early stage in order to gain and sustain support both from outside and inside the neighborhood. Funders of an initiative, for example, generally want early signs that their investments are paying off and merit continued support. And, neighborhood residents also need evidence that their investment--be it their time, their institutional resources, their political support, or whatever--is worthwhile.

The first section of this chapter looks at the basic issue in the process-product tension: the difficulty of maintaining a commitment to process in the face of internal drives and external pressures toward product on the one hand, and, on the other, the difficulty of moving forward on products while focusing on process. The analysis reveals a commitment to both process and product in CCIs, but considerable variation in views on the optimal relationship between them. The section concludes by sketching this variation. The second section examines the process-product tension as manifested in the structure, programs, and evaluations of CCIs, covering such issues as governance, staffing, community organizing, and defining success.

### **DEFINING THE TENSION BETWEEN PROCESS AND PRODUCT AND SEARCHING FOR BALANCE**

The signs of early progress in most neighborhood change efforts are generally in the form of “product”--housing units under construction, new street lights, or an immunization campaign, for example. Outcomes of this sort--concrete manifestations of neighborhood improvement--motivate CCIs as well. This is especially important because of the difficulty associated with providing evidence of a strengthened “social fabric” or of improved “community capacity” over the long term, much less in the short time frame within which most stakeholders want to see that their investments are working.

You have to have measurable successes. And you have to have them for two reasons. One, because people in the community have to see it to stay with the program, and two, you have to have it for your funding. Funders don't want to know that you went to ten meetings. They want to know, ‘What was measurable and what did you accomplish by this money?’

Some advocate strongly for early products and warn that focusing on the “process” of change can become all-consuming and risks not leading to any meaningful improvement in the neighborhood. The observers, directors and funders appear to be especially cautious. As one observer suggested:

I've seen so many of these programs that are all process and nothing gets produced. And we can't make it that way in these poor communities . . . because it can look very pretty on paper and if it doesn't produce real results in those communities, why bother?

Those who have been active in CDCs, for example, in reviewing the history of the movement, stress the importance of their visible accomplishments. “We built buildings. We delivered, we made buildings.

People saw, and that got us our legitimacy.” In fact, for some, even new services are not an adequate early outcome since they are not literally “concrete” and “you’re not going to have anything very visible to show” to the community.

Yet, according to others, there is a danger that, in pushing too hard for early products, an initiative sacrifices the community-building potential of a neighborhood activity. In the press to get the job done, it becomes tempting to value speed and efficiency over the process of developing capacity within the neighborhood to address both today’s and tomorrow’s needs. Many individuals involved with a CCI can relate a story of how slippery the slope can be, as in this evaluator’s description of an initiative’s quick retreat to product.

What happens, even if the organization starts out saying ‘We want to build capacity,’ is that it’s so tempting for them to take on programs and operate them themselves because they’ll get credit for it, because they’ll show something concrete, which they won’t if they’re capacity building. And then the evaluators reinforce it because they say ‘What have you done?’ And it’s very hard to say ‘Well, this leadership has developed, and this organization is now better positioned to do different kinds of work.’ Those are hard to measure. So it’s very easy to fall away from community building work. . . . For example, [I know of a] specific case where they started in the human services area with the notion of building capacity in other organizations to deliver family support. And what do they end up doing? Running their own family support center. And I see that over and over again, this temptation to just take over and do it [because of] credit, control and you can get funding for it.

A core lesson that emerges from the experience of current CCIs is that both process and product are critical, that one without the other will not achieve the desired goals at the individual, neighborhood and system levels. Attempting to balance the two to achieve initiative goals, however, is no easy task and creates a core tension. If an initiative’s only goals were to produce houses, deliver services, or create jobs, this tension would figure much less prominently. This tension would also be less prominent if, conversely, the initiative aimed only to strengthen social networks or enhance a participatory development process. But a distinguishing feature of CCIs is that, in addition to seeking improvements in the lives of individuals and neighborhoods, they also place value on the process of change and, in particular, on ensuring that capacity building occurs at the same time as program activities. One person describes the CCI strategy as making sure that

. . . every objective stands for two things: an end in and of itself, and a stage of development, a means to a later end, whatever that end might be. . . . If houses are built, fine. But the fact that houses are built is a demonstration of your capacity. And that’s its importance. It’s not about building houses. Because we could have funded you to build houses [in a much less complicated way]. That’s not what it was about. It was your ability to understand that you needed houses, your ability to internalize it sufficiently, to access the resources that you needed, to learn how to access resources, bring those resources in and build your houses as a step towards something else. And the importance is you built your own capacity.

Unfortunately, however, understanding this need for both does not put us in the comfortable position described by this hopeful observer of the field:

Once all the parties agree that producing housing, providing child care, and so on is not enough, but that capacity building is necessary, then you don't have to worry about the tension between the capacity-building objective and the getting-things-done objective.

Instead, a very complex balancing act is implied, and all stakeholders must negotiate continuously between the two objectives in order to maximize the positive and creative dimensions of the tension and to counter the perceived tradeoffs between process and product that push CCIs into one camp or the other.

### **The Process-Product Continuum**

There is variation across initiatives, and sometimes even within initiatives, regarding the relative weight that should be placed on process and on product. (The fact that these differences exist across initiatives is one of the reasons that it is difficult to distill cross-cutting lessons about what is working in CCIs.) At one end of the continuum are those who value the process of community building over all other activities. The continuum then moves through those who see attention to process as *critical* to CCI success to those who see it as just one of several important ingredients. The other end of the continuum is made up of those who value product first and foremost. Comments that exemplify these four points along the continuum follow.

- On the process end:

For me houses without social capital is an empty shell which will soon crumble.  
Whereas social capital without houses is much more desirable because I believe that out of social capital in the long term there will be outcomes.

- Process as critical, where the creation of dense social networks and the building of capacity needs to be pursued explicitly and continuously:

By way of metaphor, if you imagine multiple strands of DNA coming together where there is engagement-success, engagement-success, engagement-success, in a place, and then you've got that happening with lots of different people around lots of different issues--all of those things together are social capital. . . . The CDC people may be coming together around housing issues; the arts and education projects are coming together around after-school programs and school reform using arts as a tool of curricular integration; the economic development folks, sometimes drawing from these other people, are coming together about potential commercial development. In each of those things there's a product . . . there needs to be a purpose for the coming together which then encourages people to come together again for other purposes.

- Process as important, mostly as a vehicle for enhancing outcomes:

There's a lot of opportunity for capacity building within the actual process of doing. . . . The rent-up process [an effort to get residents to move into new housing] is a terrific example of how we did the wrong thing. We hired a bunch of people, piece workers, you know, paid them per interview, boom-boom-boom-boom. They interviewed all these people, they did the site visit, the home visit, they got the people in, they filled up these buildings with people. They were all tax credit eligible. Then our piece workers left and suddenly we had all these buildings and we didn't know who any of these people

were who were living in them and they didn't know each other. The next round, what we did was we got our first group of ten people. We interviewed them. We certified them, and then it was hard, we didn't meet the deadline, but we trained them to interview the other people. So essentially they selected their neighbors . . . and in that case we had built community, we hadn't just rented up a building.”

- On the product end of the continuum:

What is it that led to the creation of the Bedford-Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation? It was the Bobby Kennedy hearing, when he walked the streets, ‘we want to see something.’ They wanted to see something three dimensional. They wanted to see housing and a movie theater and so on. . . . It had to start with an agenda that produced something in short order.

It is not unusual for stakeholders within a single CCI to occupy different positions on the continuum. When this occurs, they must be prepared to work through those differences as they are likely to lead to different program strategies, different funding priorities, and different interim markers of progress. For example, as one CCI director noted, in his community the senior citizens wanted to focus attention on “rebuilding” their community, strengthening relationships and recreating the safe and supportive environment that they knew as they were growing up. The young adults in that community were more interested in jobs--because of their different life cycle needs, and perhaps because they had never experienced “community” in the way remembered by their elderly neighbors--and they thought that job creation should be the CCI’s focus. These two positions came into conflict when program development priorities were debated and funding decisions needed to be made. This tension can play out all the way through to the evaluation. As one evaluator puts it: “Funders say, ‘Tell me all about community building. By the way, I’d like to see 80 units in production.’”

Being clear about the position of an initiative or individual on the process-product continuum does not mean being static. Stakeholders report that their perspectives on the relative weights of the two dimensions can change over the course of an initiative. This may be due to one or a combination of various factors including feedback about how certain strategies are working which in turn leads to a need for mid-course correction, the natural “life cycle” of a community initiative, or developments in a neighborhood. It is possible, for example, to conclude that in a particular neighborhood it would be important for the initiative to get some activities up and running in an efficient way:

If you wanted a comprehensive quick array of programs whose purpose was to move synergistically and in an integrated fashion as quickly as possible in a community, I think you could make a good case that the best way to do that would be to get the seven or eight most powerful people in the city into the room and find a way for them to cut a deal with each other.

Or, it is possible that, after several unsuccessful efforts at engaging residents in the initiative, an initiative may need to pursue a different strategy for a short while. As one director describes:

Two things were happening. Number one, we were not meeting whatever the expectations were for resident participation on the committee level and at community meetings. And number two, we just knew very clearly that good input could come from a number of places. . . . So we decided to just kick off some stuff and go ahead with what we were hearing from the few residents who were involved.

## THE PROCESS-PRODUCT TENSION AS SEEN THROUGH CCI STRUCTURE, PROGRAMS, AND EVALUATION

The tension between process and product plays out throughout the course of an initiative in three important arenas. One is in the structure of the initiative itself: the institutions through which it operates and its governing mechanism, and the ways in which the initiative is staffed and assisted technically. The second is in the activities that the CCI undertakes and supports, including those to improve individual and neighborhood outcomes as well as those specifically aimed at community building. The third is in the definition of success of the initiative and in the evaluation enterprise itself. In all three arenas, CCI stakeholders at all levels are gaining experience in recognizing and negotiating around the tension and have conclusions and lessons to share.

### The Process-Product Tension as Revealed in the Structure of the CCI

**Governance: Efficiency vs. participation.** A critical set of decisions faced by the funders, designers and early participants in a CCI revolves around the overall governance structure of the initiative, that is, the institutions and individuals expected to take on leadership, management and technical roles. A guiding concern is how they will relate to one another and to those not a part of the inner circle and on how to increase the capacity of these institutions and individuals over time. Not surprisingly, none of those decisions is clear-cut and each has a series of real and perceived tradeoffs associated with it.

The most commonly cited tradeoff is that between building capacity and getting things done, or process and product. The general line of the product argument is that improving individual and neighborhood well-being is hard enough without the messiness of creating new agency collaboratives, developing new leadership, developing local capacity for staffing and providing technical assistance, and inserting a community-building agenda into the mission and evaluation. Why put extra burdens on the initiative? The counterargument is that any new initiative, almost by definition, is going to be time-limited, and if the positive effects of today's work are to be sustained over time, then the neighborhood must have the capacity to continue to carry out good work.

The key lesson that the CCIs are learning with respect to governance is that neighborhood revitalization depends on a new way of doing business at the neighborhood level and between the neighborhood and outside forces. Therefore, capacity building for neighborhood-level actors is not optional for CCIs, it is necessary. And this will be true regardless of the "start-up" institutional configuration that is chosen (see the discussion in Chapter Five about working through a lead agency vs. creating new collaborative) and regardless of the ultimate governance structure that is adopted by a CCI. To the extent that capacity building is viewed as being in opposition to 'getting things done' many of the ways in which it is needed and can be accomplished may be missed. One funder describes how this issue surfaces repeatedly in his foundation's grant making decisions. Foundations, he explains, are in the fortunate position to create opportunities for change that is "more than merely incremental," but they quickly face the problem that neighborhood capacity

... is relatively stagnant or rising at too slow a rate to respond to real opportunities. And much of the problem is that we under attend, in real significant and consistent ways, to the issue of capacity building. ... So, we are always left with the unconscionable dilemma of slowing down the process until somebody can play catch up.

Governance is one of the most powerful tools, perhaps even the most powerful tool, at the disposal of the CCI for providing for the continuous and positive interaction between process and product. The governance structure has the ability to develop new leadership, to make new connections among people, to make new connections among organizations, and to create new organizations if necessary. As one person explains, governance is a necessary element for lots of things, "but mostly for transforming the ways people in those neighborhoods think about themselves vis-à-vis what they can do." A commonly held view is that while any particular product that emerges from the work of a CCI is surely valuable, what is more important is the feeling that "we figured that if we could do that one thing, we could do some other things in our community too."

The CCI participants who are also residents strongly express the need to involve residents in all aspects of the decision-making and management processes if CCIs are to become legitimate actors in their neighborhoods and to achieve sustainable change. In describing his initiative's weak neighborhood involvement, one resident uses the metaphor of a train going down the track but with the passengers cars, meaning the residents, left behind. "And if the train doesn't stop, the people might blow up the track." They suggest that there are very few things that can be accomplished successfully in a neighborhood without resident involvement. In fact, the only activity that elicits no cautions is street cleaning. Stories abound of efforts to name a park or building or to move a basketball court to a "better" location that have caused enormous outcry. If there are things that can be done in more than one way, or if the aim is to put into place something for the benefit of the community, consultation, at a minimum, is required. And, although there are many things to do that do not appear to require consultation with community members, it's as if "they're sleeping. And if you do the wrong thing, you could find out very quickly that they weren't sleeping, they were just sitting there waiting."

While the value of resident participation is widely stressed, there is some concern about the possible costs associated with emphasizing resident involvement and the community-building aspects of the CCI: focusing on the process may slow down the delivery of product. The perceived tradeoff appears to be more pronounced in the start-up phase of an initiative (see Chapter 5) than once it is underway, however, and there is a strong consensus that the establishment of a healthy process is key to sustainability. A resident, who is also a member of a governing board, suggests:

Certain things need to be done in a more timely manner but . . . that's not possible because you have to have consensus from folks in the neighborhood. You have to have them buy into projects and developments, otherwise they're just not going to work . . . . Like our housing situation. If I didn't get the folks in those neighborhoods involved, I could put it up, but they sure could take it down...and I'm talking about literally taking it down. I mean, as the construction people put it up in the daytime, they'd take it apart at night time.

Stakeholders agree that once a good process of CCI governance and decision making is in place consensus on community priorities is easier to maintain. One explains how she has adopted the slogan "trust the process" because the extremes tend to fall out and negative elements tend to be neutralized: "So we completely trust the process in our neighborhood. We know that when we're done, the middle ground that everybody can agree on is what will really rise to the top." Participatory governing structures of CCIs can also be critical vehicles for reducing conflict in the initiative and in the community over time. As the initiative unfolds, the governance mechanism

helps us to negotiate conflicts in more just ways. When you don't know people's face, it's easy to screw them. But when you really have to look them in the face and say, 'Oh God, I really know you and I know your kids, but I'm going to screw you anyway,' it's really harder.

Within a single geographic community there are usually several subcommunities with their own interests and needs. A CCI board might be made up of representatives of different organizational or individual interests, and one aspect of community building is working successfully through these differences. Several people describe problems with self interest among the members of their initiative and how the governing structure has been an instrument for resolving this problem:

We decided that self-interest is not a bad thing. It's there, it's what drives a lot of us to do what we do, but let's just put it out on the table and talk about what our self-interest is, why we're in this, and then begin to find ways in which [our separate interests] connect.

Creating a sense of community in neighborhoods where the array of self-interests is complicated by a history of ethnic division is likely to be extremely difficult however, and there are few proven tools for addressing this situation. Almost all CCIs are located in neighborhoods made up of people of color and, in those neighborhoods with a second significant minority group, residents and governance members expressed concerns about the failure of the dominant group to successfully incorporate other ethnic groups into the CCI.

Finally, having invested in the process and developed a strong neighborhood identity, initiative participants believe that they have a stronger base from which to deal with the outside community. Traditional organizers have long said that an organized neighborhood is a more powerful neighborhood, and the community building dimension of CCIs is based in part on that philosophy. Some of the proudest moments of CCIs have come when the neighborhood has had an impact on an outside event or the actions of an outside entity. Examples include: getting the city to respond to the problem of illegal dumping in the neighborhood, voting in record numbers for Hispanic public officials, co-investing with a development company in the creation of an industrial park at the edge of the neighborhood and encouraging a major bank to locate a branch in the neighborhood. As one governance member explained:

It's a process approach . . . [but] it does ultimately deal with program. . . . It's not a bunch of professionals and reformers changing the local school. It's the parents and the seniors in that community taking on the principal in that school, and building with another school. . . .

**Staffing and technical assistance.** The process-product tension plays out in decisions regarding staffing and technical assistance in CCIs. Should the CCI be staffed by someone with solid technical skills who is able to put together housing deals or supervise the staff of a family support center? Or, are technical skills secondary to "process" skills that encourage a range of actors to come to the table and work together on neighborhood problems? A clear lesson from experienced CCIs is that the set of skills relating to convening, facilitating, and supporting others in their efforts to get things done is more important. There is a sense that an initiative can contract for specific technical advice and that, in fact, hiring someone with deep and narrow expertise could distort the CCI enterprise toward that person's field.

Securing technical assistance is, however, complicated when viewed through the lens of the process-product tension. Sometimes it is easier to invest in outside consultants to get the job done than to invest in developing the capacity of staff or of local institutions to address the need on an ongoing

basis. That strategy may sacrifice sustainability for early products. In fact, some warn that the TA provider can actually end up operating parts of the initiative which then “undoes the purpose of TA, which is to build the capacity locally. They sort of become the staff person.”

Choosing a technical assistance (TA) provider is also complicated by CCIs' dual commitment to process and product, and by the fact that there are few TA providers who can assist in both spheres: “TA for community building and TA for the ‘substance’ (like community policing, housing financing, and so on)-- it’s not the same people . . . .” The product side of the TA supply appears to be more fully developed and readily available than process-oriented assistance and initiative directors and staff express disappointment with their experience with the latter. Being clear that there is a community-building agenda is a first step since it helps set the stage for a better match between provider and initiative.

CCI directors, in particular, have found that a key challenge is figuring out how to use technical assistance well. One describes her frustration with the amount of time that she needs to invest in TA providers in order to receive anything of value back from them. There appears to be an emerging consensus that the best kind of technical assistance--TA that both provides the necessary skills and builds local capacity--is in the form of “coaching.” As one director describes:

The idea of inventing capacity in the organization as the goal of TA can’t be underestimated. When we finally figured out that we didn’t want someone to come and do it for us, and that we wanted a coach instead, we actually started verbalizing our requests for help as a request for coaching . . . [and the best source is someone who has] done the ‘it’ before and is able to step back from it and learn some things and then, with humility, deliver some advice.

A longtime observer of the field who is also a technical assistance provider describes how he and his colleagues have adopted a coaching approach, but he cautions that it is far more complicated than the traditional TA method of dropping into a project, sharing your expertise, accomplishing a task and then moving on.

The way we try to do this is to try to create and coach and train in the local neighborhood the capacity over time to do this for themselves. So when there is a problem, we try not to go in and solve it but to point out that there’s a problem and try to get the people to solve it themselves. And to my mind, that’s essential to long-run sustainability for these initiatives. That the capacity exists in the community, led by community residents, to do these things effectively over time. That’s the way I think about this. [But] in that sense I’ve never seen it really done yet. It’s an elusive ideal but we’re working towards it.

## **Program Activities**

The process-product tension also plays out in decisions regarding where to invest program dollars. There are those who feel that the CCI neighborhoods are generally so needy that priority should be placed on investments that will produce or rehabilitate housing, expand or improve services, develop jobs, and so on. The counterargument goes as follows: first, CCI funding is generally not of a magnitude to finance new services or housing production, and therefore must be used to leverage larger funding streams; second, CCI resources are time-limited and therefore downstream financing must be contemplated if any new activities are put into place; and, third, given the first two points, community building activities have the potential to have the greatest pay-off over the years. In general CCIs mix and match between investing in products and investing in community building, but the aim is to find

strategic points where the CCI's flexible dollars can be most effectively used. Thus, when CCIs identify "product-oriented" activities, funds might be used to seal a financial deal for an industrial park, to provide start-up funds for a Head Start center that will be self-financing, or other projects that are unlikely to require ongoing investment on the part of the CCI.

Some of the CCIs have embarked on particular projects that have "community building" as their sole objective, with mixed results. Although these activities are varied, examples include community "celebrations," establishing mutual support networks, and holding peer discussion groups. Some feel that activities of this nature are too purposeless to be of much use to those who participate, that the process objectives are meaningless without some type of product. As one person puts it, "Who spends time community building in the abstract?" Others report positive experiences when the activities are not meant to stand alone, but are linked, as organically as possible, to other neighborhood events or efforts. One funder reports that, in her experience, these kinds of activities work best when groups are created for problem-solving reasons such as selecting the residents who will participate in a training program or revamping the neighborhood's family resource center.

Community organizing is traditionally thought of as a vehicle for community building. Yet there is a growing consensus that the kind of organizing that makes most sense in the context of CCIs is different from "classical" community organizing around a particular issue or a political cause. When viewed through the CCI lens, it is clear that community organizing, too, must attend to both process and product, and to tailoring the organizing effort to individual community interests in both process and product. In the words of one director:

I think that organizing for the purpose of organizing . . . has turned off our communities. We are now really, really tired of being organized by professionals who know how to get *anything* started, who know how to do the flip charts, who know how to ask the correct questions.

CCI organizing should not be thought of as a one-time event aimed at achieving one specific and immediate outcome. Various stakeholders describe how CCIs need "process" organizing that evolves over the course of the initiative, first engaging different players in a planning and "visioning" process, then designing and implementing programs, and then reaching out anew, even "marketing," and redefining program activities. Organizing along those lines "keeps people moving and growing and empowers them along the way." The need is for a "coalition agent for whoever is out there who wants to work together" on issues that no single organization could handle on its own and to represent the neighborhood to the outside world.

Thus, as one director describes it, there is a critical need for community organizing, but it needs to be tailored to the dual agenda of CCIs:

I think it's still the essential part of building a community, making sure the people in the community have some direction, have some kind of format under which they're working and have some leaders that have emerged from that community, not been selected or identified by some group who have a profile of what a leader's supposed to be like . . . . I think the people in the community can organize a block, they can organize a PTA, they can organize an effort. And those need to be the people who do the organizing

Two critical lessons about how to engage neighborhood residents in the CCI process emerge from the recent experiences of CCI practitioners. The first is that CCI leaders must be deliberate about

making resident engagement an ongoing priority. Often, the need is perceived only episodically, but in order for positive change to be sustained, it must be continuous.

The longer this project goes on, or its children go on, there will probably always be points in time where the people who are doing the governing will say 'we need to do more community organizing.' So from our point of view, it's been very essential and an ongoing essential, but it hasn't been steady throughout.

The absence of funds for outreach and organizing may make this difficult. Many directors have found it hard to obtain funding for organizing purposes, and "without someone being willing to pay for this job, it's not going to happen." Even when funds are dedicated, the salaries that can be offered to organizers are generally very low.

The second lesson about reaching out and mobilizing residents is that there is no end to the list of strategies--some of them creative and some of them quite mundane--that can be used to get a neighborhood mobilized. One of the most common strategies for mobilization is to set up a large number of task forces and committees around issues of importance to the neighborhood. This allows residents to participate in CCI activities at any number of levels and on any number of issues. There is strong consensus around the fact that it is almost impossible to over-inform the residents of the neighborhood about what the CCI is doing, and so flyers, community meetings, a community newsletter, posting signs in the local stores are all essential organizing tools. Other engagement strategies include working through neighborhood institutions such as the school or the church, organizing community meetings, and developing a 'block captain' system. As one director points out:

I think there are a lot of leaders in our community that are not easily identified by normal methods . . . and it's good to set up a format that allows leaders to emerge and let them do the organizing. We found, block by block . . . it's just amazing. We started with three people coming, and then we had six people coming, and the last meeting we had twenty. And out of that you see the leadership emerging, just by saying 'Let's come together because we want to paint houses.'"

Several directors point to the need to have a continuous effort to enroll youth and young adults in organizing activities. They stress the long term pay-offs of focusing them on community needs and their potential contribution to community well-being.

Neighborhood-based information and analysis can also be extremely powerful tools for resident mobilization and participation. As residents gain a better sense of the problems and strengths of their neighborhood and the dynamics that caused them, they are better positioned to determine the types of strategies that make the most sense for them. One initiative got its start through a neighbor-to-neighbor survey, where one person on each block went door to door to solicit ideas for neighborhood improvement. As the staff member describes it: "We feel that another piece of this, in terms of resident power, is we have to start putting in the hands of neighborhood people the tools, which include information because people have to make informed decisions." A resident voices a similar perspective: "We live in the 21st century . . . whoever controls the communication controls the community . . . Put [communication tools] in the hands of the people and let them get the message out and communicate."

#### **Evaluation and the Process-Product Tension**

Although it is possible to launch a CCI, and even to implement it, without reconciling the process-product tension, it is not possible to develop an evaluation plan for an initiative without having done so. It is, after all, in the process of designing an evaluation that specific decisions must be made regarding the type and degree of change that is sought and the measures that would indicate whether that change is occurring. For some, process indicators are more powerful than for others:

For our neighborhoods, the fact that the people are organized and coming together to get street lights and having the attention from downtown, for them that's progress. For our funders, it's not necessarily.

One of the principal reasons that this tension plagues the evaluation enterprise is that all those involved with CCIs recognize that the concept of community building is hard to define and to measure. And, in any case, perhaps there is no end point of a "built" community--perhaps community building is a continually evolving process that looks different at different points in time. Because it is so difficult to define and measure these concepts, there is a temptation for CCI evaluations to downplay or miss the process dimensions of the initiative. As one evaluator reports: "That capacity building part slips off so easily, that unless [it's brought up constantly] through the training of the people you've got in the field, through the reporting system that they have, through the evaluation system. . . it's so easy to slip off . . ."

One evaluator describes assessing community capacity in the following way:

Part of what makes it hard is that in order to know you've got it, there have to be some concrete products. You know, you did the houses or the lot or the day care center or the whatever, and that's the proof. If you do a range of those products, then that's the proof that you have the generalized capacity. And then the question is 'How do you recognize that before the demonstration of the product?' The closest I come in the intervention I'm looking at . . . the way they frame that is 'When you have an issue that affects this community you will know somebody to call: (a) there will be somebody to call about this issue, and (b) you'll know who it is and you'll know them [or] you'll have an entree with them.' So there's a competency element to it and a connectedness.

Even at the individual level, where measures of "capacity" would presumably be easier to track than at the institutional or community level, there is a strong sense among initiative participants that the accomplishments of a CCI will go unobserved by traditional evaluation methods. For example, one governance member described changes in her neighborhood in the following way:

I see different residents begin to expand their involvement, not only within the target community, but outside in the broader community, and I hear key words being used to indicate that they see themselves differently. It's not something funders are probably going to measure and value the way the community does, but it's making profound difference in the self-image. And once the self-image is corrected or balanced so it's not seen as a deficit, what we're beginning to see is how people show up more powerfully in everything that they do...So it becomes very broad, and sometimes even almost lost in the myriad of things that people do. But there's a strength there.

This problem of measuring community building has several important costs. One of the most problematic is that outcomes for which there are good measures, such as aggregate-level indicators of

infant mortality, teen pregnancy, income and the like, will be relied upon as the sole indicator of CCI progress. But the CCI intervention is rarely powerful enough or structured so as to significantly affect such indicators in the short and medium terms. (Participants' estimates of the time necessary to see measurable results varied from two to ten years, but most questioned whether one could expect to see true community change within a decade. The optimal evaluation would remain in place after the initiative has ended, to continue to track long-term community change.) The danger of focusing inappropriately on measurable "products" is articulated by one director:

I really believe that the government and the foundations have probably abandoned numerous good interventions simply because global measures were used against particular interventions and absolutely false conclusions were drawn with respect to the consequences. That's a huge danger that I see. The other side of this is then to be very careful about the measures, the order of magnitude to fit an image between what you're actually purporting to measure and the conclusions you're drawing.

The fact that product is so much more easily measured than the effects of process can lead to other problems. In the worst cases, sites may resist evaluation altogether because they believe that evaluators lack the tools to show their progress on the community building front. In other cases, the search for meaningful process indicators may lead evaluators to spend enormous time and energy documenting the CCI's activities, at great expense to the site or the funder. In still other cases, the CCI may redefine its objectives in order to become more readily evaluable by traditional means. One evaluator describes some aspects of these dilemmas:

The evaluator has been put in a double bind. One, you have to come up with indicators that make sense, and all the measurement problems that obtain, and second, you have to go back for clarification on the objective, which becomes a didactic exercise after a while. Pretty soon, you're telling the client, whether you want to or not, hey, it would be a lot easier to measure this thing if you just write it this way.

The challenge to all involved is to be clear about the vision of the CCI and to agree on both process and product outcomes that are linked to that vision. Then, interim outcomes or markers of progress that correspond, at least theoretically, to those longer term outcomes can be identified. And, once those steps occur, a review of measures and methods for obtaining those measures can be undertaken by the evaluator in collaboration with the community and with the funder. By and large, this will entail constructing and checking the validity of linkages between activities and outcomes. Some activities are interim points along a linear path to an outcome, but some activities are not so directly linked to particular outcomes, but to the development of generalized capacity.

An evaluator describes how agreement about the initiative's objectives can work to produce consensus on measures. In the CCI which she is evaluating, all parties have agreed that community building is a core goal:

It's been very useful in the sense that it allows the initiative to show results of different kinds very quickly, both inside the neighborhoods and outside the neighborhoods. Because if a group gets itself together, and 'we're the governing body and four months ago we didn't know one another, and today we just held a town meeting and 100 people came,' that's a product. And we all know it's a product, and the mayor knows it's a product, she was there, and so on. So it allows you to show results that aren't houses or paved streets or clean lots or whatever.

Some participants suggest that if a participatory process for defining evaluation methods and measures is used, the evaluation itself has the potential to reinforce the community-building dimension of the CCI. In particular, according to this view, it can reduce the various tensions within an initiative, especially the “us” vs. “them” nature of the evaluation enterprise and the “process” vs. “product” tension. One governance member tells of his CCI’s experience, where the evaluator held training sessions for board members and steering committee members to talk about evaluation and “the resentment and ambivalence or whatever kind of died down because we understood what he was doing.” The group turned to discussions of how they could use the evaluator’s “impartial, detached view of the way things are going” to the ongoing benefit of the initiative. One longtime observer of the field suggests that a collaborative’s ability to approach evaluation in this constructive way may, in itself, be an evaluation point and one of the best measures of collaborative functioning.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: THE INSIDE-OUTSIDE TENSION**

Comprehensive community initiatives bring together a wide range of actors in order to effect neighborhood change, including funders, staff, neighborhood stakeholders, technical assistance providers, and evaluators. In bringing these groups together, CCI architects and planners aim deliberately to provide the initiatives with a broad diversity of experiences, resources, skills, and viewpoints. Given their diversity, it is not surprising that interactions among these groups are often marked by tension, as actors promote differing perspectives on the goals, principles and operations of CCIs. Moreover, other dividing lines, such as those between professionals and non-professionals, residents and non-residents, and racial and ethnic groups, frequently cross-cut the functional categories, heightening intrinsic tension.

When negotiated and balanced, tension of this kind can strengthen and enrich CCIs, as partners draw on each other's backgrounds and capabilities. For example, funders, with their contacts, prestige, and resources, collaborate with neighborhoods to leverage new sources of support, or project directors glean insights from evaluators' perspectives to resolve administrative dilemmas. But this tension can also generate misunderstanding and conflict, as each group tries to assert its particular view of the aims and strategies of the initiative.

Much of the tension generated by these differing perspectives can be understood as the tension between "inside" and "outside," a geographically based metaphor that reflects an "us" and "them" distinction. Connection to the neighborhood is usually the standard for insider status, with the phrase characterizing a perceived conjunction of initiative staff, participants and other residents and stakeholders. The phrase opposes these insiders to those outside neighborhood, particularly the funder but sometimes also technical assistance providers, evaluators, and others.

In CCIs, there are various configurations of inside and outside and the dividing line is porous. For example, in hiring staff, initiatives may grapple with whether insider status refers only to neighborhood residency or whether similarities in background also qualify. Comparable definitional questions also arise in developing governance boards, as communities try to pull together an effective mix of members that might include, for example, residents, non-residents, professionals, local power brokers, "pillars of the community," and others.

Moreover, the delineations may shift during the course of an initiative or change meaning depending on context. Residents, for example, may differ among themselves, but coalesce in opposition to outside technical assistance providers. And there may be differing opinions within groups, or crossovers where, for example, a funder's view on an issue coincides more closely with that of residents than with other funders. Still, the metaphor of inside-outside tensions provides a widely recognized, sharply defined, and frequently applicable framework.

Some of the most immediately evident and strongest tensions around the development and implementation of CCIs crop up in the interaction between the initiative (that is, the institutional base, local staff, program participants and residents) and the funder (that is, financial sponsors or other external convenors and their staff). This dynamic is, in fact, the paradigmatic inside-outside relationship. These partners are likely to differ greatly not only in perspectives and agendas, but also on a range of social variables including race, ethnicity, professional status, economic class, residence, access to opportunity, educational background, and future prospects. These differences often complicate the challenge of CCIs

to find common ground, to draw on the strengths and richness of their diversity, and to work together to effect meaningful change.

The chapter is divided into three broad sections. The first section examines the relationship between funder and initiative, focusing on initial expectations and the meaning of success. This exploration of the relationship between initiative and funder, as the prime example of inside-outside tension, provides pivotal insights into the current status of CCIs, with their drive to bring together a range of actors, drawing on disparate perspectives for creative and constructive ends. Within the overall structural framework of this relationship, the second section considers two important implementation processes: the provision of technical assistance and evaluation. Finally, the third section considers the role of governance mechanisms in local initiatives.

## **INITIATIVE-FUNDER: THE PARADIGMATIC INSIDE-OUTSIDE RELATIONSHIP**

The tension in the inside-outside relationship of CCIs and their funders revolves around basic issues of authority, control, responsibility, and accountability. Who holds the balance of power, resources, and leverage to make decisions that are fundamental to the initiative? This question plays out most clearly in two pivotal areas: in defining the initiative itself and its goals, and in defining the meaning of success. The interactions between initiatives and funders around these two issues tend to frame all aspects of the initiative's implementation dynamics including relationships with technical assistance providers, evaluators, and, at times, among neighborhood stakeholders as well.

### **Defining the Initiative**

Frequently, a CCI is funder-initiated and -defined, at least in its broad parameters, while local initiative staff and participants conceptualize and develop the particular means for enacting the general approach. Funder support traditionally includes financial resources, but may also encompass access to connections, influence, and national standing. In addition, it may entail the introduction of a range of conceptual frameworks, goals and aims, technical assistance, and assessment tools. Perhaps most important, outside support often carries with it funder expectations, requirements, and the exercise of assumed decision-making prerogatives within these realms. Overall, initiatives recognize and value the access to resources and the legitimacy that funders can bring. But, at the same time, initiatives are increasingly alert to the tensions raised when their definitions, goals, and needs diverge from those of the funder. Moreover, initiatives are increasingly willing and able to point out such tensions as they look for ways to take greater control of what happens in their neighborhoods, essentially looking to renegotiate roles and influence in their relationships with funders.

From the very outset of the CCI endeavor, there is a potential for tension between the needs and desires of the funder and those of the initiative. At times this distinction is clearly drawn, as when neighborhood residents and other local stakeholders see themselves as needing to stand their ground against valuable but powerful supporters. For example, some residents argue that the initiative should focus on creating the community that the people want, and not the one that the funder envisions. At an extreme, some residents and governance members argue, in fact, that funder expectations must be clearly stated so the community can decide whether to accept or refuse funding. These tensions arise out of the sense among participants that the funder has preempted their right to define the initiative for themselves. For example, a resident who also directs the initiative in her neighborhood explains:

If someone other than those in the neighborhood brings the vision, then it's not the neighborhood's vision. I think the most valuable thing that a convenor could bring . . . is

money. [But,] the money has to be unfettered by a vision . . . there's an assumption that some leader, convenor, like a foundation or a community foundation, has to bring the vision otherwise it won't be there. Then that would feel to me like manipulation. You need to understand . . . part of me is an executive director [of the initiative]. . . . And the other part of me is the resident who feels [like saying], 'Quit coming in here and telling us what the vision is. Stop doing it. I don't care how much money you have.'

An insistence on the centrality of local perspectives often goes beyond the question of funder-initiative roles and responsibilities and attempts to draw clear lines around the meaning of community and who exactly is included. A governance participant says:

Non-profits tend to think they are the community, because their boards are made up of community people, or their staff. But really, as a whole, as an entity, non-profits are not the community. They may be the keepers of the vision . . . but their decisions aren't necessarily the right decisions unless it's community driven. . . . you need to look at the people who are living there [in the neighborhood] every single day. They're the ones who are the community.

Tensions about such basic issues as defining the initiative, and indeed about who has the right to make such decisions, may even arise around core CCI principles. For example, an evaluator, in discussing comprehensiveness, says: "I think poor people struggling to put something together in a community have a shorter tolerance for generalization [i.e., comprehensiveness] than paid professionals," but they cannot follow their own inclinations "because it's the paid professionals who are setting the terms." And, inside-outside tensions are intrinsic to such notions as "empowerment" and "capacity building." After all, who empowers and whose capacity is being built? As one evaluator puts it, "[it] simply reduces down to who the 'we' is." Another evaluator describes how the funder's and initiative's views on empowerment can differ: a funder may state that community empowerment is an objective but then "when the community decides to do something, the funder says, 'No, not that. You're empowered to do the other stuff.'"

Funders are also increasingly aware of the potential tensions in their relationships with the initiatives and some are making concerted efforts to work out new roles for themselves in the CCI context. One says, for example, that funders are trying to evolve a leadership style that is "distinctly not command and control, but sort of call and response and respecting the process above all else and believing in your partners . . . ." Another funder moves to a more fundamental level, calling into question not just the style of the funder role, but what that role should be:

There's a tension between being a patron, being in partnership, or having the neighborhood as your client. It's a mistake veering too far into being their patron . . . what I mean by that is not being honest enough, frank enough, direct enough about what my expectations were, what they were really accountable for, what were the constraints in the real world . . . coddling them.

One observer frames the extremes of funder role options, recognizing the central fact that funders have money:

On the one hand, the funder comes in and says, 'We've got a bunch of money, this is the model, this is what we want you to do, you really aren't important, we are going to pass it through you to accomplish our end, we're going to send technical assistance people in

to do it for you, but you don't really matter.' That's the one extreme. The other extreme is throw the money out there, put the money in their hands and say, 'Go do it.'

Yet despite this self-conscious consideration of their roles, shifting expectations make it difficult for funders to find the right balance in their relationships with initiatives. For example, while the purpose of empowerment is to transform decision-making authority, issues of leadership and responsibility remain for the funders:

I think we are abdicating our responsibility if we just say any decision that is made is *ipso facto* correct just because we believe in empowerment. I think that isn't being fair. It's applying a very different standard than we apply to anybody else in this world and we have an obligation to hold the collaboratives to very high standards.

At least some residents and governance members express frustration over perceived laxness and irresponsibility on the part of funders who do not make sure that funds are being spent according to initiative guidelines or that programs are actually providing services. Similarly, an evaluator points out that funders tend to underestimate their power and therefore do not take responsibility for it. They may not know or acknowledge how they dominate the action, either explicitly or behind the scenes.

The principle of comprehensiveness and perhaps particularly the idea of empowerment cycle back to issues at the core of the relationship between funders and local actors, such as authority, decision-making prerogative, and accountability. Yet the aim of CCIs is not simply to move control from one side of the relationship to the other, but to find ways to achieve collective action. It may be, however, that such a shift can happen only through the push-and-pull of actors as they try to find effective balance points in the ongoing negotiations over power.

### **The Meaning of Success**

The linked issues of setting expectations, creating positive change, and determining initiative success also lie at the heart of the relationship between funders and initiatives. As an observer summarizes, there is a need to "... demonstrate that what we're all about in our lives is making a difference, is having a positive impact." At the same time, initiative success means different things to different people, and is another flashpoint for tensions in the inside-outside relationship.

Many funders have decided that, since categorical approaches have not led to fundamental change, the answer must lie with comprehensive approaches. But this choice may be incompatible with the basic orientation of funders. These new approaches require long-term perspectives and new ways of doing business; yet, as one evaluator comments, "the more experimental and the riskier the investment, the hungrier [funders] are for clear and concise accomplishments." A funder explains one of the criteria he faces when he makes a funding decision:

The real test is how we explain and support, in fact, that this is about good investment. I have faith, I do have faith, that that ultimately can be done, but I think that it is a very, very difficult challenge. But can it can be done in a way that is acceptable to outside skeptical policy makers who are going to say, 'Show me'?

There is a point of coincidence where success has meaning in multiple worlds: in the world of personal satisfaction and achievement, in the institutional world of career advancement, and in the world of policy and social impact. Interwoven throughout, of course, is the competitiveness among foundations

to support initiatives that are perceived as groundbreaking and consequential. Funders, therefore, look not only for change, but change that is deemed to have policy-level resonance. Such an aim may lead funders to a focus on substantive areas or abstracted goals, such as comprehensiveness, that may not be perceived as matching the needs of communities. The aim may also lead to large-scale expectations that residents feel are impossible to meet. A resident and community activist argues, "You can't expect to put a couple of hundred thousand dollars into a community like my community for a one-year period or an 18-month period and . . . create this utopia." But such expectations may become part of the "rhetoric" or "hype" about the program. And, in fact, this rhetoric may be used not only by funders to trumpet the foundation's intentions, but also in the neighborhood to arouse the interest of residents, often a difficult process.

In part, the role of foundations and, by extension, of individual funders is to make things happen, to catalyze change. Some warn that this can lead to a personalization of the initiative, saying, "The sad reality is . . . funders are very insecure. Each one of them wants to put a label on their accomplishments of something . . . ." They point to the fact that new program officers tend to set new priorities and redefine success for an initiative. Some push for funders to admit explicitly that they are not simply providing funds, but looking for their own rewards as well. For example, a resident involved in governance says, "The funder is a customer. He's getting something for giving you a certain amount of money . . . let's be honest . . . a feather in [his] cap." Others believe that funder simply want to be associated with success, pointing, for example, to the wish of sponsors to join an initiative once it has been deemed a success.

For their part, neighborhood-based CCI actors often have a working definition of success that differs both in substance and in contextual roots from that of funders. This definition has an emotional impetus where the difficulty of life in the neighborhood and the suffering of residents becomes a touchstone and point of authority for those in the neighborhood. This also becomes the basis for arguing that residents, who will be most affected by the initiative, know best what needs to be done and how to do it. For example, when describing the governance process in one initiative, a resident says, "A lot of times we find when you bring people in who don't live there, who don't go through the aches and pains like we do as residents, [they] aren't as sensitive when it comes to voting as we are."

Such experiential knowledge cannot, of course, be fully shared by outsiders, but initiative staff and participants in the neighborhood increasingly demand that it be respected by funders and other outsiders, such as technical assistance providers and evaluators, for whom the ability to work well with neighborhood people is increasingly important. At times, working in poverty has deep impact on outside professionals as well, creating in some cases a "witness" aspect to documentation and evaluation endeavors. One evaluator says:

. . . the degree of suffering that we look at, and . . . that our funders look at, and think about, and care about when they look at these communities is almost more than anyone can think about. And what we have to tell them about what happens in the alleviation of that suffering is unacceptable in some human way. Not enough, obviously. And so, we can never give the right news.

At the same time, this experiential knowledge leads to different measures and meanings for initiative success. A governance member says that people in her neighborhood are:

. . . gaining some personal, very intimate kinds of benefits. They don't care whether it's . . . on paper; they don't care whether you can count it or whether you can touch it. It's more

of an emotional thing that they feel that change has taken place on that level and that's equally as valuable.

The notion of intimacy of benefits is pivotal in grasping differences among definitions of success, and must be taken into account in efforts to reconcile these meanings. A funder reiterates how the degree of closeness to the initiative gives rise to different perspectives on whether change has occurred, and therefore on the question of success. The farther people are from the neighborhood, he says, the less convinced they are that something has happened: the initiatives are "convinced that they're making a huge difference in the neighborhood" and funders are the least convinced. "It might be that unless you're close enough to the action to see, feel, and touch what's going on, you aren't going to be convinced and you never will be, because there aren't going to be these wonderful quantifiable things that are going on."

In response, some actors propose the value of bringing the funder closer to the neighborhood, hoping to develop more direct and personal perceptions of this experiential knowledge. Thus, a director argues the value of putting a "human face" on the initiative by creating personal contact between the funder and program participants; a staff member suggests using residents as "community ambassadors" to talk with foundation staff about their neighborhood and the changes that are occurring there; and a resident pushes for more intimate participation of funders in the evaluation process by building relationships with residents and participants, and not dealing through intermediaries.

It is not yet clear, however, whether closer contact actually affects relations between the funder and the initiative. More specifically, it is not clear how such contact might influence funder responses to the various calls for initiative success. In part, the challenge to CCIs may be to recognize, legitimate, and negotiate around the various levels and meanings of success.

## **IMPORTED SUPPORT**

The inside-outside framework provides a useful lens on how the initiative and the funder engage in ongoing interaction to meet planning and implementation challenges. This section explores inside-outside tensions through two pivotal processes, technical assistance and evaluation. These activities, like implementation overall, largely occur within the structural framework of the funder-initiative relationship, which, as discussed above, entails inside-outside tensions around expectations, roles, and locus of decision making. Though funders and neighborhood-based initiative actors are key players here, other groups of actors are, of course, involved as well. And, the line dividing insiders and outsiders may shift in the course of implementation processes, changing definitions of who is in and who is out, and actors sometimes share perspectives across group boundaries.

### **Technical Assistance**

Technical assistance brings to the fore issues of decision-making responsibility and authority, specifically over who can decide the basic questions about technical assistance, such as: who receives it, at what times, in what ways, and with what content. These issues and their attendant tensions tend to center on the relationship of the funder to the rest of the initiative.

When a community feels that technical assistance is imposed by the funder, there are tensions that community members explicitly and clearly articulate. For example, a governance group member recalls such a situation:

... [the] hard part was that the community felt that the person was being pushed on them, so they pushed back and said, 'no.' And so that caused a problem. The TA wasn't weaned into the community ... and so there was a push. ... It was a rebellion by the community.

The focus here is how technical assistance is provided rather than the substantive areas of assistance. A funder reiterates this perspective, characterizing the imposition of technical assistance on initiatives as "forced marriages," and commenting that even when such a marriage works, "it was still forced on them by a funder and it just is an endless uphill climb."

Initiative resistance to imposed technical assistance reflects the desire of initiatives for autonomy, and their vigilance against encroachments by their stronger partners. This resistance is intensified when an initiative interprets the introduction of a consultant as a means for the funder to meet its own needs, and not necessarily those of the initiative in the community.

The way technical assistance is introduced into the community is just one point of possible difficulty. Questions and challenges arise concerning the appropriate use of technical assistance in community-empowering initiatives and about the ways in which technical assistance is practiced. For example, a governance member describes in part the reaction of residents to technical assistance:

[If] TA comes in and facilitates everything ... people don't say, they don't contribute, they don't share their ideas. And what happens ... is that when the funding dries up or shifts, people drop out of it because there was no ownership at the neighborhood-based level.

One funder suggests a conflict of aims when funders bring "highly skilled technical people from outside into a process that is at the same time empowering local residents." An observer points to the same conflict, arguing that technical assistance providers are likely to want to take over and perform the task at hand. "[I]f you're a technical assistance provider, you end up wanting to do stuff. That's what technical assistant people, consultants, do. They do stuff." Funders can reinforce the TA provider's impulse "to do stuff" when, as contracting agents, they define task completion as a measure of TA success.

This is not to argue that technical assistance has no place in an initiative. Certainly, both initiative participants and funders recognize the need for communities to broaden their horizons, deepen local capacity, and have recourse to technical expertise. However, many agree that the process of decision-making concerning technical assistance must change. At the least, CCI actors agree that funders and communities must work together in technical assistance ventures. But many go further and suggest that the initiative must control the use of technical assistance.

The following are suggested ways to ensure that technical assistance is used to best advantage:

- An initiative must be clear about its definition of the problem and what is needed, so it can use technical assistance effectively, and not be driven by it.
- It is critical to engage technical assistance providers who know how to listen to the initiative and community, provide practical options to accomplish what needs to get done, and then allow the initiative to decide next steps.

- Technical assistance need not come from professionals or academics; at times, peer-to-peer consulting or input from neighborhood people can be the best assistance, especially in areas such as community organizing or recruiting and engaging residents.
- Community control of technical assistance funding and contracts can help make sure the initiative gets what it wants.

This does not mean that communities need no assistance in using TA, or that funders have no role in the process. A responsible funder can, for example, help the community think through the logistics for technical assistance, including criteria for selecting a provider, ways to use a consultant, benchmarks for performance, and appropriate fee levels. As a governance member says, "We needed a way to know what we needed." But many emphasize that such help should not include selecting the provider or deciding what needs to be done.

## Evaluation

Evaluation gives rise to inside-outside tensions, many of which arise between funders and initiatives. Evaluators often feel caught in these tensions as they try simultaneously to meet the demands of funders and to walk the fine line in the neighborhood between evaluation and technical assistance provision. Many of the tensions in evaluation relate not so much to the technical aspects of developing new methodologies, but to social and political meanings of evaluations, and, not surprisingly, to the disparate definitions of initiative success discussed above.

**Real change.** As noted earlier, funders often look to evaluation for evidence that initiatives have not only created change, but change at a level deemed consequential. In large part, funders want this evidence in order to address such audiences as policy makers, legislators, and their own and other foundations. Evaluators often argue that it is very difficult to identify interim markers that are compelling for funders, who want markers and outcomes that legitimate funding decisions. To meet this need, funders at times want to use aggregate measures to assess progress, even when, according to some evaluators, these measures are inappropriate for the level of initiative operations. Such an emphasis on large-scale, measurable change, and especially on outcomes, has created a sense of frustration and distrust, not only among initiative actors and residents in neighborhoods, but also among evaluators and even some funders as well.

On the other hand, funders often disagree with the contention that they focus only on evaluation numbers. One points, for example, to the inappropriateness of looking for outcomes in the early years of an initiative, when participants are building infrastructures and laying the groundwork for future development. Others argue that they are careful to admit the limits of their knowledge and to curb expectations:

... we're very clear about the fact that this is a big experiment. And we're putting money into a whole lot of new things, many of which probably won't work or probably won't work in achieving the desired outcomes, and we're learning and we're experimenting . . . We've said, 'Let's get this down to really commonsense, plain talk, honest expectation-setting about what we can and can't do. And the fact that this is an experiment.'

A local staff member joins these voices, pushing initiatives and communities to see foundation program officers not as individuals who give out money and want to look important, but as people who are deeply interested in the critical problems and issues at hand.

In part, the mistrust between local initiative actors and initiative funders is rooted in differing perspectives on the meaning of "real change." For example, when evaluations focus on outcomes, they neglect, according to many initiative participants, changes that are very real, but are not easily measured, such as declines in the level of social isolation, growing social integration, or changing attitudes toward the community. Similarly, although community-based neighborhood initiative actors may argue that learning should be seen as a critical outcome, they believe that funders do not want to hear about such lessons. Rather, according to some local staff, funders want:

... to know whether you met the numbers or didn't meet the numbers. And I think we learn a lot, but nobody wants to learn from us in the neighborhoods. They just want to see--'Okay, you said you were going to build 24 houses. Did you build 24 houses?' They don't want to know that we're now experts in soil remediation.

Some suggest that this sense of divergent definitions of real change and of valid measures could be ameliorated if funders incorporated initiative perspectives into the evaluation design.

**Role of the evaluator.** Tensions over the focus of evaluation efforts can give rise to pressure on evaluators. Within the initiative-funder relationship, such pressure may place evaluators on the boundary between insider and outsider status. On the one hand, as discussed above, funders frequently rely on evaluators for assessment of the progress of initiatives, justification of the investment of resources, and ammunition in broader policy deliberations. This reliance, and especially perceived evaluator responsiveness to it, can place evaluators clearly outside the community. Thus, for example, local initiative actors and residents may see evaluations as giving "the foundations what they want to hear. That's their return on their investment." Underscoring this perception of at least some evaluation efforts, an observer points out that at times the evaluator's job is to provide a favorable report on the funding manager's performance. "There are a lot of hired guns out there who practice from that perspective." Somewhat less cynically, an evaluator describes the demands of his role and, in doing so, sums up many of the difficulties of an intermediary caught in inside-outside tensions:

As an evaluator ... [I find that funders are] pressing you to one degree or another to say things that don't exist in reality. They then sometimes turn to you as a TA provider and sort of basically say, 'I know you couldn't say this and evaluate it. Could you make it happen as a TA provider? You know, I want to be 70 percent of the way there. Why don't you give me some TA, then we'll be 70 percent, then you can tell me we are.' And so, you have to find two different ways ... from two different roles for telling them the fantasy and the reality, have to kind of find a happier meeting ground.

Initiatives often emphasize that evaluations are "learning instruments," including evaluation for feedback and for ongoing program development. Here an evaluator can play a pivotal role in the relationship of the initiative and funder, providing an effective and constructive intermediary ground between inside and outside. For example, a director says:

Some of my experiences with evaluators, both local and national, that I value the most is when I can just sit and have another person to brainstorm with. Often, you know, I find

myself without a real peer in town to talk to. Either they're a collaborative member, a committee member, a grantee, a funder, a board member, or an employee. So to be able to sit and talk with someone else who is looking at the big picture has been incredibly helpful.

At least some residents and staff argue that evaluations should focus on documentation of implementation processes, rather than outcome measures. But initiatives are filled with pragmatic people who understand that evaluation is not meant exclusively, if at all, for their own development. Thus, a staff member says:

One of the things that evaluation is proving for us is that we have double-edged swords. While they provide you with phenomenal management information . . . they can slit your throat with funders. Because if they don't say the things that funders want to hear, or demonstrate that you knew what you were doing with the money they gave you the first time . . . the funding community is not very lenient when it comes to mistakes. So they could work for you or do it to you, depending upon where you sit and how they come out. The concern that I have is that they're so critical to the long-term viability of any of these projects. I think what we probably need to do is to re-engineer the thinking of the funding community . . . . No one has yet figured out the formula for success in community transformation and development. So we've got to have this margin of error where we can make some mistakes. We don't know how to do it right yet, folks, and we need to be able to have the luxury of learning how to do that. The evaluations are not going to be valuable if we pay for them with the foundation funding and then slide them into a drawer because they don't say what we want them to say. They're only valuable if you take what's told to you and you do something about it. And you can't do that if you don't get any more money.

Here, as at other critical inside-outside junctures in the practice of CCIs, there is a need to balance the tensions of multiple perceptions and multiple claims to initiative ownership. In terms of evaluation, this seems to call for weighing and negotiating a need for outcomes with a willingness to allow initiatives room to rethink strategies based on evaluation findings.

## **BALANCING INSIDE AND OUTSIDE: THE POTENTIAL OF GOVERNANCE**

On some basic governance issues, there is significant agreement across various groups of actors in CCIs. There is, for example, general agreement about the need to develop some kind of local governance process and the critical importance of engaging neighborhood members in that process. There is also consensus about the value of representativeness, that is, of involving a range of groups representing different perspectives, backgrounds, and roles, and about the importance of developing local capacity and leadership.

Beyond such general areas of agreement, however, there are many points of divergence, frequently falling along inside-outside lines, but sometimes the lines shift, regrouping insiders and outsiders in the process. These differing perspectives often emerge as actors deal with pragmatic operational issues, including the size and composition of the governance body, its structure, level of representativeness, relationship with the funder and with the larger community, and its areas of responsibility and authority. Perspectives differ, as well, on the meaning and goals of local governance, and its intersection with various aspects of empowerment.

Many governance issues arise at the point where pronouncements about governance and community empowerment bump up against concrete manifestations of local self-determination. It is useful, then, to explore diverging perspectives on some of these operational questions, both to grasp the tensions around the implementation of governance mechanisms, and to understand how such mechanisms may provide the arena for the ongoing negotiation of inside-outside tensions.

## **The Framework of Governance**

Two pivotal inside-outside issues regarding local governance mechanisms are the extent of their independence and control, and the composition of the governance groups themselves. These two issues overlap as they play out in the day-to-day implementation of CCIs.

**The independence of local governance mechanisms.** The issue of independence centers not on the question of whether initiatives should be independent but, rather, on the question of degree. Some funders, for example, recognize a need to cede control over local initiatives to governance structures, but argue this must happen within certain bounds or with certain "strings attached." For example, a funder says, "On the decision making . . . the funder has to back off from control, but . . . within the framework of principles and expectations." Others, however, propose a more hands-off stance:

There are . . . three levels of players in a lot of [CCIs]. There's the neighborhood residents or parents, sort of the grassroots level, on the one end. At the other end, there's the systems level, represented by perhaps the medical center, or school district, or county. And then in the middle there are all those non-profit providers, whether they're CDCs or social service agencies. And increasingly it's become clear . . . [that the] provider level and the systems level have to get out of the way . . . and let the community or the parents . . . 'find their own voice.' If they can't do that without being pushed around or intimidated by the other two levels, then nothing happens.

While pointing out the "enormous mind set change . . . to really transfer authority to residents and citizens," another funder asserts that when the focus is on empowerment, control over funding decisions must be devolved: "who controls the money is a very significant factor." This sentiment is echoed by a program director who says, "Let's be real. It's money driving the stuff that we're talking about."

Yet, initiative staff and neighborhood residents also voice a mix of perspectives. For example, a project director begins, "One of the issues that we struggle with and we argue about a lot is: you told us this is about empowerment and this was our process, and now you're telling us what to do, and we don't want that." At the same time, she is realistic about the fact that initiatives must work within the constraints of funders:

But the fact of the matter is, funders, in particular, are not going to just put some money out and walk away. And so we found ourselves [in]--I call it . . . 'creative tension,' negotiating back and forth about what this means, and what is success, and what does the community want. It's really a negotiating process of give-and- take.

Moreover, in this negotiating process, funder demands or "strings" may, as an evaluator says, be "consistently positive in their impact" on the initiative. At the same time, requirements are only as good as their constructive enforcement. The evaluator continues, "[A]n important place where the program has

gotten off track . . . has been because the funders didn't hold up their end of the job in insisting that the conditions actually be met." Some directors and neighborhood residents agree, arguing that funders have a responsibility to remain involved in the implementation of initiatives, insisting that they operate as expected. In addition to such monitoring, some argue that funders must think through their own expectations, and then communicate them clearly to the initiative, governance board, community, and others involved in the project. Again, an evaluator comments:

A common problem is that the people holding the strings, whether it's the funders or the leader of a major institution, are not clear enough in their own minds what the strings are, what the limitations are. . . . And so inevitably they don't communicate the limitations clearly to the residents or other people. And when the residents bump up against the limitations, both parties are surprised. The residents feel betrayed and their trust tends to dissolve rather quickly.

**The composition of governance mechanisms.** Representativeness is a key issue in matters of governance composition. Here, representativeness refers to the inclusion of community members and other individuals with a range of backgrounds, skills, and experiences. There is strong consensus about the need to achieve both community representation and diversity on several dimensions, but there remain questions about the meaning of diversity and who constitutes the community. In the course of answering these questions, the lines demarcating insides and outsides shift and blur.

There is little question about the need to include neighborhood residents on governance boards. Some evaluators argue the case in historical terms: given the fact that many initiatives in the past have disenfranchised neighborhood people, CCIs have to fight skepticism by working explicitly to engage residents and other stakeholders. Others point simply to the vision and perspectives that residents can bring, and some of these argue for a governance board composed mainly of residents in order to "really reflect the needs of the neighborhood." Yet, some raise issues around who actually reflects the community. For example, an evaluator points out that:

[T]here's also a danger when we talk about residents [that we're] somehow assuming homogeneity there. There's tremendous variation. In [our city], we literally establish quotas of representation by different cultural communities, not based on percentage of the population but just on existence. . . . we found [that] we need such compensatory measures to keep the normally dominant group from just sort of taking over.

The issue of racial and ethnic divisions within a neighborhood rarely arose explicitly in the peer group discussions; however, a few examples, such as this quote, provide insights into these additional factors in the shifting alignment of insiders and outsiders. Living in a neighborhood may not automatically confer insider status unless, as above, the initiative devises a conscious mechanism to ensure representativeness.

Governance membership and leadership in the initiative may cause the lines defining inside and outside to shift as the initiative itself is seen to create differential access to influence and opportunity. CCIs aim to develop local capacity and encourage local leadership. Yet, in an ironic twist, some residents may perceive emerging local leaders in a different light, redefining them as outsiders. A resident comments, for example, "If you put on a coat and tie, you may no longer be perceived as one of us." Another resident and project director describes an approach he hopes counteracts such changing perceptions:

If you're grounded, there's that respect that's accorded to you throughout the community . . . even though they might see you one day on TV with your shirt and tie on standing next to the mayor. The next day, they see you with your tennis shoes and your jogging suit on standing down there. . . . They see you walking through the neighborhood. They see you carrying your groceries home. . . . But if they don't see you, then you . . . disconnect yourself . . . from the folks who you purport to work with and work for . . . .

In addition to the consensus about including neighborhood residents, there is strong consensus about aiming for diversity among governance board members. This may begin with the simple extension of governance boards to include non-residents; for example, a governance member argues that "a neighborhood is part of a larger community" and any group composed only of neighborhood people will have a difficult time running a CCI. Relevant "outsiders" may include people with "political clout," representatives of local government, outsiders who can contribute a perspective "from a distance," technical assistance providers, and others. The critical issue may be, in the end, a shared stance toward change. A funder emphasizes the need to focus on commitment to change in creating governance entities:

It's [not] so important . . . whether you start at the neighborhood level, at the local institutional level, or at the system level, as long as there is an overarching theory or belief that all three levels have to change. . . . And there's an integrity to that belief that drives the work so that you don't give lip service to that notion but you really focus only on one level.

### **The Practice Of Governance**

Even when a governance board achieves representativeness through the inclusion of a diverse range of neighborhood members and others, various tensions may arise regarding who is actually inside and outside the practice of power. For example, initial differences in experience, styles of self-presentation, and knowledge of bureaucratic niceties and strategies may make it difficult for resident voices to be expressed, listened to, and heeded. Moreover, some, including evaluators and staff, argue that outsiders will not fully attend to the views of residents until initiatives either prepare them to sit at the governance table, or structure the board in such a way that residents are deliberately over-represented. An observer sums up this sentiment: "What we haven't done is enhance the capacity of people in the neighborhood . . . to be able to come to the table as equals to leverage their particular [perspective]."

At the same time, some residents and staff point out that learning has to occur on the other side of the table as well. As a staff member argues, "We have a lot of opinions, but they don't listen to us. They don't care whether we're sitting in the room or not. They expect us to just nod, because they don't think that we have anything to say." A resident describes the difficult coming together of residents and outsiders:

Bringing people who live in . . . [upper-class neighborhoods] to come in and sit at the table with neighborhood people when they've never done it before, you've got a credibility issue there. 'What do these people know even though that's their neighborhood? They don't know anything because they don't have the education to understand, to know what they need.' So, it took a long time for even respect to come across the table.

A staff person underscores the need for work on both sides of the table if CCI actors are to overcome inside-outside tensions and work effectively as a team: "[It's] not just preparing residents to be able to sit in there and fight, you know, but you have to reform the boards and the agencies themselves in terms of whether they respect people and think that they have something to say."

In addition, the effectiveness of residents in governance structures may be limited by factors other than these. In a statement that brings together issues of representativeness and effectiveness, another governance member underlines the desirability for diversity in counterpoint to a funder's sole focus on grassroots participation:

Another problem that we had in the beginning was the fact that our funders pretty much mandated that the board be totally grassroots people from the neighborhood . . . . And what we ran into is . . . we had board members who had no earthly idea what it meant to actually sit on a board and make those kinds of decisions.

Such difficulties involving residents, especially those without governance experience, also crop up in comments of those responsible for managing initiatives. Directors and staff cite instances, for example, when board members do not "know the difference between policy decisions and management decisions," or "want to be the administrator as well as the policy maker." Here, training of neighborhood people for participation on governance boards goes beyond issues of style to include clarity about the role of the board and how it functions.

Despite complications and difficulties, local governance provides CCIs with a potential means for meeting a complex challenge that is intrinsic to CCIs: to negotiate authority, control, responsibility, and accountability across a range of actors who come together to effect deep, meaningful, and lasting change. In some ways, the tensions inherent in the dynamics of CCIs reflect tensions in any bureaucratic undertaking, but they may be intensified by CCIs' deliberate aim to shift and reshape decision-making processes. It is in this endeavor that governance boards, with their emphases on collaboration, representativeness, and inclusion, may be pivotal in providing what one observer describes as "the choreography of effective leadership and management."

## **CHAPTER FIVE: GETTING STARTED: FINDINGS ABOUT THE EARLY PHASES OF A CCI**

As the previous chapters have suggested, few of the operational lessons about CCIs are one-dimensional. They are difficult to pinpoint because they depend on the history and culture of the neighborhood, the context in which the initiative is being developed, the funder's priorities and constraints, the technical resources that are made available, and so on. Moreover, because the CCI phenomenon is still young, lessons based on experience are necessarily limited to those that apply to the earliest decisions that are made by CCI architects, planners and sponsors. This chapter highlights six findings about CCI operations that appear to be emerging from this early experience.

The reader should bear in mind that many lessons are still intertwined within the tensions between process and product and between inside and outside that characterize CCIs, and are better understood within that context. Two points concerning the lessons presented here deserve special mention. First, the lessons here focus narrowly on operations; other important findings have been woven into the discussion above concerning such issues as the critical importance of resident engagement or the role of community building. Second, these findings should not be seen as all that is to be learned about operations in the field of CCIs. Most of what there is to learn about CCIs remains to be unveiled as the field matures.

### **Developing program priorities**

Although CCIs have a comprehensive mandate, it is important to get started *somewhere* and not to feel compelled to start with a fully fleshed-out implementation plan. A short-term focus at the beginning helps to avoid getting "stuck" in discussions about long-term objectives. There is general agreement, however, that there is no one right place to start for a CCI; the choice should be made based on the neighborhood context and the particular goals of the initiative planners. The starting point can be at the individual, neighborhood, or systems level or in any domain of importance to the neighborhood: individuals who want to open home businesses, parents with young children, residents of a particular block, homeowner associations, the neighborhood's entire nonprofit community, the school system, a commercial strip, and so forth. Participants suggest that some combination of the following criteria constitute the most effective way to identify a starting point:

- Build on existing assets
- Respond to community needs
- Mobilize broad participation
- Target short-term, visible accomplishments
- Leverage changes in other areas

One orienting approach that has gained popularity among initiatives is to build on individual and neighborhood "assets." Traditionally, strategies at the individual level have focused on reducing or eliminating deficits or problems that present barriers to change. For example, illiteracy and lack of marketable skills, poor work habits, substance abuse and health problems, and family violence have all been the subject of numerous, usually categorical, change efforts. Similarly, community needs assessments have focused on defining and prioritizing the problems facing the neighborhood. More recently, there has been a movement to identify resident and neighborhood assets and to design the CCI strategy to build on them. This does not imply that more traditional service strategies are excluded, only

that taking advantage of strengths confers important additional strategic benefits. Several participants from predominantly African-American communities, for example, speak to the important role that racial pride and cultural tradition can play in community development. Moreover, since an asset-based approach identifies neighborhood leadership, it can provide guidance in terms of who to involve in the early development of the initiative.

Perhaps the most important element of a comprehensive approach, more important than the choice of starting point, is the capacity to build links across projects, to gradually build from a focus on the chosen starting point to a range of development areas. The notion is that specific, necessarily limited, change activities must "catalyze" action in other areas, create "synergy" across actions, and lead to a whole that is greater than the sum of the parts. Given limited resources, every action must serve a number of functions if change of significant scope and scale is to occur. Some participants talked about creating a "snowball effect" or building a "momentum for change." One evaluator described this process as follows:

An initiative is successful not because the people get together and make comprehensive change, but because the changes they make and the process that is entailed somehow provoke an across-the-board response, so that the police start doing their job, and the Fire Department starts coming to the fires, and the streets start to get paved, and the services start to get delivered, and the schools start to get better . . . If you're solely reliant on what the initiative does alone, then you never realize the vision.

It is critical for CCIs to be strategic about their choices regarding deployment of staff and resources. Therefore, the most strategic point of entry is one from which a progressively more comprehensive and synergistic approach can best be developed.

Small successes at the neighborhood level can serve to help the initiative gain momentum and give those already involved a sense of accomplishment. Several participants gave examples of short-term accomplishments in their initiatives that have served to mobilize support, including: getting drug dealers out of a park, preventing a school from being built next to a prison, closing a bar, and putting in a four-way stop sign. They note that the key to using these accomplishments to maximum advantage is to make sure that they are part of a larger plan that links the specific action to the broader vision and that identifies related areas of activity that could be catalyzed by early successes in the initial area. Articulating and working to exploit these linkages among areas helps to reduce the danger of discrete activities becoming ends in themselves and diverting energy and resources away from implementation of the initiative's comprehensive agenda. This approach requires an entrepreneurial and opportunistic stance, with a keen eye to the catalytic potential of a single activity to contribute to the initiative's longer term objectives.

### **Establishing the institutional base for the initiative**

The complex nature of the CCI enterprise places special demands on the organization responsible for planning and implementing an initiative. In the critical early stages of a CCI, the question of instrumentality tends to focus around the choice of working through an existing organization, or "lead agency" such as a community development corporation or a service agency, or creating a new mechanism such as a collaborative board or coalition.

One side of the argument suggests that working through a strong existing organization in the neighborhood, with a professional staff and the best technical assistance that foundation funds can buy is the most strategic and effective way to ensure improvements in individuals and communities. In the words of one observer: "The anointing of that lead organization may be despotic and autocratic but it is also effective." For example, there are many people who see CDCs as experienced and "pragmatic" organizations that already have the ability to work effectively at the neighborhood level and that "set up very practical governing structures" and know how to get "the important players to the table." As one observer notes, "to try to do a broader based collaborative in a neighborhood where there is an effective CDC . . . is missing a real opportunity and resource."

But CCI participants at all levels voice cautions about working through a strong lead agency. One important concern is that existing organizations in the community have vested interests to protect, whether they are social service organizations, CDCs, schools, churches, public housing tenant organizations, or even experienced community organizers who might have more of a political agenda. As one director recounts: "We went through the [process of asking] is there a legitimacy attached to any of these alternatives, and ultimately became convinced that the answer was no, that they all had baggage." Those interests might relate to funding base, to political base, or even particular personalities, and it is difficult for an outside organization, such as a funder, to appreciate those intricate relationships.

The second caution is that existing institutions also have an established way of doing business and, therefore, operational constraints to taking on the CCI agenda.

Where we see problems is where grants are given to already existing organizations to direct the community development process, but they, in fact, already have their own purpose and mission. . . . They cannot be expected to adjust, to be inclusive and reach out further, whatever else.

This is particularly the case when an initiative, working through a technically sophisticated organization like a CDC, puts the community-building agenda on the front burner and expects a change in operating style.

The more sophisticated CDCs are not terrific collaborators . . . they've kind of gotten used to doing it on their own. And because of their concern with capital and the time value of money and all the things that developers care about, they don't have time. Process is not something they've really done a lot of in the housing development world. And so this notion of partnership--if not total collaboration--partnership is proving to be kind of challenging for them.

Creating a new collaboration of some form is the other principal governance strategy that CCIs tend to follow. In these instances, there is no one lead agency. Individuals are brought together, sometimes as representatives of their employer agencies and sometimes without formal representational roles, into a new decision-making and management structure. Generally, these structures are made up of residents and non-residents who are perceived to have access to outside resources or power. Their degree of formality varies widely, from temporary ad hoc collaboratives to formal boards that go on to create new, independent 501(c)(3) organizations.

Creating some new form of collaboration is seen as necessary in some of the most depleted neighborhoods either because they lack strong neighborhood institutions or because those that exist are unlikely to be able to deal with all the demands that a CCI places on an organization for political,

technical, historical or other reasons. Where strong institutions do exist, CCI designers may nonetheless choose to create a new collaborative structure as a mechanism for avoiding the problems of entrenched interests and ways of doing business described above. The new collaborative is seen to allow an initiative to start with a clean slate:

If you really want to affect a whole community, to not start with a 501(c)(3), I think, is a better idea. Because you're then, by definition, legally formless. And that gives you some time to actually get to know who's in your community, and not set the rules so tightly on the front end. So I would say some coalition or collaborative structure that's loose enough to be able to get going on things and do a lot of exploratory stuff, to put together a vision, a plan, would be the ideal if you're trying to affect one neighborhood.

But creating a new collaborative has its costs as well. New collaborations need to develop operating procedures from scratch and they need to earn their legitimacy. The process of creating a new institution, whether formal or informal, is so cumbersome that some feel that its prospects for effecting real change are actually weakened. One observer describes a community group that

brought together sixty-two agencies and there was this incredible process. They produced a product, this plan, that had some seventy-three initiatives in there. Most of it pretty do-able, I thought. I mean it was not one of these pie in the sky, let's have a mall and all, it was real stuff. The problem is now, they can't get it done. There's the plan, there's all these initiatives, but when they try to decide, okay which one of the seventy-three do we do first, they can't -- because it was a consensus thing, because there's really no driving force there except the coalition.

Moreover, a contrived collaborative may not survive beyond the foundation's funding.

One of the problems with the collaboratives that are created, in response to a funder's initiative, is that they're not very durable...[In one initiative] it took so darn long for the collaborative to form itself. You know they spent all their time trying to figure out well, what is it that this funder really wants? And the truth is it was so new for everybody they didn't really know for sure . . . But very few of those collaboratives still exist.

Thus, although the question of working through a lead agency versus creating a new collaborative may appear central to those in the early stages of CCI design, a clear conclusion from the experience of CCIs that have been in operation for some time is that the question sets up a false dichotomy. All CCIs are simultaneously working with existing organizations and creating something new. A new collaborative will need to work with existing neighborhood institutions, and an anointed lead agency will be required to interact with the neighborhood in new and different ways. Therefore, if the enormous weight given to the 'new vs. existing organization decision' is based on the search for shortcuts on the capacity-building front, it is now clear that few, if any, such shortcuts exist.

The key is to ensure that form and function are well-matched, and that one dimension does not get out too much in front of the other. One long-time observer of the field warned that the new CCIs seem to spend too much effort up front tweaking the governance structure, even before the CCI activities are well-defined:

I think that in my experience that one mistake that's made in these initiatives is to start first with trying to figure out a structure and process as the first challenge. In the things that I've seen work, whether they're called CCI or others, it sort of goes the other way. First, there's a powerful notion or concept or idea somewhere that drives people to action. Then the second thing is there's leadership that's able to move it forward. And the third thing is that leader working with the notion, concept, powerful idea, defines, creates, makes up, cobbles together, process and structure to suit his or her style and to carry forth the powerful idea. Now, that's my experience of why and how things work.

Those who are designing the governance structure of a CCI need to have the tools to assess neighborhood circumstances and flexibility to respond to them, so as to maximize the initiative's potential to be comprehensive and to pursue its community-building agenda. For example, there is clear consensus that even if the single lead agency strategy is selected, it must have a resident base and it must have a record of being an effective and inclusive community planner. One funder reported a positive experience: "The lead organizations, well chosen, have the capacity to go out and bring other people to a table that is created out of their own will, for the good of their own community."

Regardless of the ultimate structure of the initiative, a series of tailored management and technical support activities are implied. For example, a new collaborative is likely to have a whole range of needs from group-building and joint "visioning" exercises to establishing a checking account. The lead agency approach has its own start-up needs:

If you're going to go with a lead agency, give them a chance to get their feet on the ground, figure out what direction they think they need to go in. And then build their collaborative, and open up a very democratic process. But [the challenge is to] not put them in the same boat as everybody else in the community because then they're not going to be able to exercise their leadership role.

Experience is also beginning to demonstrate that there are some roles that are not likely to be fulfilled through existing institutions. Given the complexity of the task at hand, initiatives may be served by designating a "coach" for the initiative: an objective party that can provide advice, support, guidance, and encouragement to the various players in the initiative. One of the primary roles of the coach would be to help the other players in the initiative to recognize and negotiate the fundamental tensions that must be negotiated as the initiative develops. This role could be placed by an individual or an institution. One emerging mechanism for managing this process is the local intermediary. Politically independent, in part because it does not compete for funding with local agencies, and able to work at various levels, the intermediary can convene diverse stakeholders to discuss options for change, often using data and research as organizing tools, and can help to staff the change process and build local capacity for reform.

## **Leadership development**

Leadership development has emerged as a fundamental element in the CCI strategy, both because of its role in improving the life circumstances of individuals and because it is a central aspect of the community-building process. In the CCI context, leadership development is seen as "supporting people through the slow process of building confidence and self-esteem" and strengthening their perceived ability to influence the events affecting their lives. One participant notes that when people see

themselves as failures, they don't want to become involved and risk being judged by others. They are too vulnerable. "Parents don't come to the PTA because they don't want to feel stupid."

Even at this early stage in CCI history, this is one area in which participants can report in depth about how the process works and its impact. Residents of the targeted neighborhoods, and especially women, speak powerfully about how developing and supporting leaders is a "one-on-one" process that requires holding people's hands, bringing them to meetings, and reinforcing the message that they are important and needed. They describe how disempowered people need to develop trust and need to feel secure enough and have the confidence to become involved in more significant ways.

You have to begin with someone that has to be feeling good enough about themselves to risk. And that's at the very bottom of it and that's where new leadership comes from. Now, you could take someone that already grew up with a high level of confidence and self esteem, but that's not what we're really all about. We're about moving people up on the ladder.

Among residents, there is a high degree of consensus around these views, summarized as, "You cannot empower people. People have to empower themselves." Perhaps the best illustration is the personal story of one woman who is now a resident and leader in one the CCI neighborhoods:

I can remember vividly when I was right here in New York State, when I was seventeen years old, with a teenage husband and two children. And I was in the migrant stream in a little place called Pooleville, New York. . . . There was a daycare center nearby and my two babies were in the day care center, and I would take them there and get ready and go to the bean field, come back, and get my children out of day care.

The nurse would come around the camp at night, you know, to see the children's shot record and physicals, or to talk to you about the children. . . . This was a big problem, you know, having parents hold onto shot records or to be able to produce them at the time or even take the children to get them. . . . The nurse was impressed with me because I was so young but yet I had my shot records and I had my children up to date. She was so impressed with that that she would come to me and ask me if I would walk around to talk to the other mothers in the camp.

I would do that with her (the nurse), whenever she'd come. . . And somehow or another she talked to the day care people and asked them--said that she thought it would be a good idea if they would hire me to be an aide over there, maybe help with lunch and this and that. . . . So I could be a link between the parents and the center. They hired me to be an aide . . . my whole life changed . . . because I realized that there was something that I could do to help somebody, I felt so good about it and I wanted to do it. And I've been doing it ever since. Had she not come along to encourage [me] and to let me know that I was valuable, that I have something to offer, I probably would have been in the [migrant] stream today.

CCIs are, in effect, opportunity structures within which new leaders can emerge and be supported. Leaders can grow within the organization as employees, board members, task force members, participants in community meetings, interns and volunteers. Most CCIs have adopted staffing strategies

that deliberately involve neighborhood residents and provide them with opportunities to take on greater responsibility over time. As one director states:

That's really been, I think, the greatest thing about this--is that we do have a continuous and ongoing training system for residents and we have been able to hire residents . . . [part of our] very competent staff are two young men who grew up in the neighborhood and who have learned the job, have been with the initiative six years now and are really leaders from the community . . . but they started out as trainees under someone else in the job.

One CCI has adopted a strategy of "parallel staffing" for leadership development. In parallel staffing, a deputy with growth potential is brought in to work alongside a highly qualified senior person to learn from him or her on a daily basis. "Now that has cost implications and management implications and sometimes race implications and all kinds of implications, but the fact of the matter is that is the only way to grow capacity is to take time to nurture it."

Participation in collaboratives and collaborative leadership requires a special set of skills and considerations and, for leadership skills to emerge, there need to be multiple vehicles for individuals to participate in the initiative. One initiative director, for example, uses her core staff to identify residents who chair each of the different committees in the governance structure. For example, "there's the loan committee and the loan officer staffs that committee, but it is chaired by a resident person. And that has worked very, very well for us and it really bolsters your staff" and resident capacity.

Over and over again, participants at all levels of CCIs spoke of "people waiting to be asked" to participate in some capacity, and of the challenge of ensuring that initiatives reach out to new people on a continuous basis.

One of the really important things that I see happening is an emergence of new leaders. I think that what happens in a lot of poor communities is there's a sort of core group of people, and they're on the advisory board of this, and then you go to the police station meeting, and they're over there. And you go to a school board meeting, and they're over there. . . . And a lot of the potential leaders get missed: that 25-year old single mother with four kids, who's the leader of her tenants' association. And so, I think it is important to give . . . [CCI workers] . . . the opportunity to identify these leaders on the ground, and not really do all the organizing themselves, but really find the leaders to do the organizing.

Few CCIs report having had much success with formal training programs. Several have developed linkages with local universities, where CCI participants are taught technical as well as management and communications skills. Those that incorporate practical experience working within the neighborhood on particular problems appear to have been the most helpful from CCI participants' perspective.

## **Funding**

Given the long-term nature of the CCI approach and mission, long-term funding is critical to the success of an initiative. This kind of support not only allows initiatives to develop far-reaching change objectives, but, just as important, it creates a longer window for the initiative to build its support base in

the community, develop its governance structure, and put in place an implementation strategy that builds incrementally from short-term activities. The funding must allow time for the laying of a foundation that will support successful implementation and community building.

Unfortunately, most funding cycles are of shorter duration than is required to put into place a sustained process of neighborhood transformation. The danger of a short-term funding commitment is that initiatives will be tempted to deliver quickly on “show me” products at the expense of investing in community building. Moreover, the relationship between funder and site that is implied by this funding practice runs counter to what is suggested by recent CCI experience: even more important than long-term funding is a long-term partnership between site and funder in which a working relationship is established, where the funding stream is flexible, and where initiative planners can communicate changes in strategy and approach with the funder as the initiative develops.

Long-term funding that appreciates the importance and pace of community building still needs to be strategically structured and to include some form of accountability. One director even feels that a guarantee of long-term funding can encourage initiative participants to get ‘soft’ and can remove the incentive for short-term action. Several participants across groups suggest that putting all the money up front is not in the interest of either the funder or the planning group. For an initiative, a sudden influx of money can distort the planning process and, while serving to bring a range of actors to the table, can lead to a focus on allocation of dollars rather than the development of a collaborative process and a shared strategic plan. Several funders and CCI directors suggest that a series of grants for planning, organizational development, capacity-building, and implementation, given out on the basis of mutually agreed-upon evidence of short-term progress, is in the best interest of both parties. In fact, some suggest that it is not even necessary for major funding to flow in the early stages of an initiative, that funding should instead serve as an incentive for action and reward for progress. Thus while the funder needs to commit a significant level of funding in order to be taken seriously, the important element is the commitment of major, long-term support, not necessarily the up-front allocation of those dollars.

Often, the principal funder of a CCI plays several roles beyond providing core funding: it frames the initiative conceptually, establishes ground rules for action, defines goals, identifies and convenes participants, and defines the terms of success. There may also be several sources of funding, and funding partners may act in concert through agreement to formally or informally defined roles and responsibilities.

Thus, CCIs place funders in a variety of roles beyond providing financial resources, including sponsor of the initiative, partner in strategic planning and course correction, and fund-raiser of additional resources for the initiative. This enhanced role places special demands on a funder’s ability to act as a collaborative partner in the initiative and to navigate the line between providing helpful guidance, direction, and accountability on the one hand and imposing from above on the other. Thus, CCIs can benefit from a partnership with a funder in which a working relationship is established where the funding stream is flexible and initiative planners can communicate changes in strategy and approach with the funder as the initiative develops.

### **Staffing and technical assistance**

Participants across the board agree that staffing of the initiative is decisively important and that its importance is often underestimated. Strategic choices regarding staffing appear to be critical for the operational success of CCIs for two principal reasons. The first is that, because CCIs are underspecified

at their outset, it falls upon the staff person to develop as well as to manage the initiative, as one person described it, "to invent the plane while you fly it." Thus, the flexibility that characterizes so many dimensions of the initiatives heightens importance of the staff role. Moreover, the role of the staff person is likely to change over the course of the initiative, and the visioning talents that are needed to set the direction for the initiative are not the same as the practical skills that are required for day-to-day implementation. Second, because of the breadth of the goals of CCIs and of the range of participants involved, initiative staff are asked to mediate between a number of constituencies. Consequently, they require strong organizational and communication skills, political acumen and an ability to work across a number of substantive areas at once. All participants agree that it is less important to find someone who is technically sophisticated (since technical assistance on particular issues can be contracted) or who is already familiar with the neighborhood than to find someone who has these skills.

There does not appear to be any natural "pipeline" for CCI staff development, and sponsors have encountered difficulty locating a pool of candidates. Moreover, given the range of duties they fulfill, staff "burn out" is, not surprisingly, a significant problem. The process of putting resources in place to support staff in their work needs to be thought through more systematically.

Participants also agree that the provision of technical assistance of all forms--from help on process issues such as board development and strategic planning to technical consultation around issues such as housing development and project-related investments--is critical to the success of a CCI. CCI directors and staff argue for greater control over the selection and direction of technical assistance providers by the initiative staff and governance body as a way of ensuring a good match between provider and neighborhood needs and of holding the technical assistance providers accountable to the local group. In this case, the sponsor could structure the general technical assistance strategy and recommend providers to the initiative, but would not be the final decision-maker. Many also recommend that funds for technical assistance be set aside by the sponsor so that they do not appear to compete with project funds.

## **Evaluation**

The purpose, structure, and use of evaluation in CCIs is complicated, but important lessons are being learned by those who have been involved in the process for some time, having more to do with specifying the nature of the problem of evaluating CCIs than with devising solutions to those problems. But general guidance can be derived from recent experience.

From a research perspective, CCI evaluations are problematic for several reasons. First, they have broad, multiple goals, the achievement of which depends on complex interactions through which participants hope to create, through an elusive combination of variables, an ongoing process of "organic" or "synergistic" change. Capturing change at all levels and across all sectors is a key challenge, as is determining how to measure the degree to which an initiative is exploiting the interdependencies across them. Second, the particular objectives identified and strategies chosen to promote progress toward these goals often develop and change over time. Third, many of the activities and their intended outcomes are difficult to measure. For example, because of the nature of the planning and governance of these initiatives, understanding issues of process and organization are crucial to making judgments about their effectiveness. CCIs are, at least in part, intended to bolster other local actors' capacities to make their individual and collective contributions to neighborhood development and so much of the impact that the work of an initiative has on a neighborhood will be indirect. Finally, the units of action for such efforts--

neighborhoods--are complex, open systems in which it is impossible to disentangle all of the many variables that may influence both the conduct and outcomes of these initiatives. Evaluators, therefore, face tremendous difficulty in drawing causal links between initiative-sponsored actions and community-level outcomes.

CCI evaluators are called upon to play multiple roles. Not only do evaluators carry out the traditional role of measuring progress towards stated outcomes, but they are also asked to document the unfolding of the initiative, provide formative feedback for management purposes, and make judgments about the full range of CCI activities. One result has been that the evaluators often find themselves playing a quasi-technical assistance role that includes strategic planning, information referral, project reporting, and public relations.

To make the most effective use of resources and to best serve the interests of the initiative, evaluators might adapt the evaluation methodology over the course of the initiative to match the pace of progress and the stage of the initiative. In the early years, when the CCI is focusing on planning, building relationships and developing capacity, documentation and ongoing feedback to aid course correction may be the most appropriate. Baseline data may also be collected at this time, with the understanding that changes in major social indicators are only likely occur over the long run. Then later in the initiative, as strategic plans are completed and projects are put in place, a more rigorous, outcome-oriented evaluation may be appropriate. This strategy suggests that a range of methodologies and both quantitative and qualitative data will need to be woven together. Finally, most initiative participants stress the importance of developing an internal capacity for self-monitoring and assessment, and suggest that this become a core element in any evaluation plan.

## EPILOGUE

This report presents a framework for understanding the challenges and potential of the CCI approach to poverty alleviation. It defines the goals, principles, operations, and program activities of CCIs with an emphasis on how they interact and inform one another. Most of the lessons that can be drawn about the field at this point are best understood with reference to those dynamics and the tensions that they create as CCIs are implemented.

Thus, the growing field of CCIs is best defined by *how* the initiatives work to promote individual and neighborhood well-being rather than by *what* they do. The implication of this finding for general social policy and for the design of poverty alleviation programs is significant. It implies that neighborhood transformation may depend less on putting into place a model configuration of comprehensive neighborhood-based activities than on developing capacity at the neighborhood level to define and effect responses to local needs on a sustained basis. This is not to suggest that more and better programs, increased economic activity and opportunities, improvements in housing and neighborhood conditions, and so on are unimportant. It suggests, instead, that they will be insufficient to achieve the kind of change that is needed in distressed neighborhoods today and into the future. It also suggests that unless local capacity is strong, program elements such as services, housing, and crime reduction will achieve only a fraction of their potential.

At the same time, however, the “tools” that are available for the majority of anti-poverty programs across the country have been cast in the “old” mold of discrete program activities. To a large extent, foundations still operate as grantmakers rather than partners in the change process; funding is still allocated in short-term intervals; technical assistance is still provided on a problem-specific, short-term basis; evaluation is still focused on measuring broad indicators that can be unambiguously linked to particular interventions; and capacity building and community building are still considered secondary to putting programs on the ground. CCIs represent the field’s best attempt to modify and apply those rusty tools to current neighborhood circumstances--and, in some CCIs, new tools are even being forged--but it is because those tools are not well-suited to the task at hand that the tensions that have been described herein, between process and product and between inside and outside, figure so prominently.

These findings also suggest that fundamental and lasting neighborhood change will require all actors to move beyond traditional definitions of their roles. Initiative staff, governance participants, funders, technical assistance providers, and evaluators will be required to take on multiple and overlapping roles, and the definition of “stakeholders” in the neighborhood will need to be broadened. Moreover, the complexity of the CCI undertaking requires a rethinking of how these players interact with one another and, in the words of one CCI stakeholder, developing new “partnerships” for change at the neighborhood level.

What this report does not tell us is whether CCIs are powerful enough to deliver on their considerable promise. Certainly those who have participated in this analysis, whether as funders, directors and staff, evaluators, governance members, or neighborhood residents, believe strongly in their potential. It is for this reason that they shared so openly with us their experience and the conclusions they are drawing from their work. But there is also a sense that this is only a beginning and that much remains to be learned.

## APPENDIX A: ROUNDTABLE MEMBERS

Harold Richman (Co-Chair)  
Director  
Chapin Hall Center for Children  
The University of Chicago

Lisbeth B. Schorr (Co-Chair)  
Lecturer in Social Medicine  
Director, Project on Effective Services  
Harvard University

Carolyn Asbury  
Director  
Health and Human Services  
The Pew Charitable Trusts

Michael Bailin  
President  
Edna McConnell Clark Foundation

Douglas Besharov  
Resident Scholar  
American Enterprise Institute  
for Public Policy Research

Angela G. Blackwell  
Vice President  
The Rockefeller Foundation

Barbara B. Blum  
President  
Foundation for Child Development

Geoffrey Canada  
Executive Director  
Rheedlen Centers for Families and Children

Robert Curvin  
Director  
Urban Poverty Program  
The Ford Foundation

Peter Edelman  
Assistant Secretary  
Planning and Evaluation  
U.S. Department of Health  
and Human Services

Donald Fraser  
Former Mayor  
City of Minneapolis

John W. Gardner  
Professor in Public Service  
Stanford University

Sid Gardner  
Director of Center for Collaboration  
for Children

Stephen Goldsmith  
Mayor  
City of Indianapolis

Patricia Graham  
President  
The Spencer Foundation

Nancy Grasmick  
Superintendent  
Maryland Dept. of Education

Ralph Hamilton  
Director of Florida Philanthropy  
The John D. and Catherine T.  
MacArthur Foundation

Ruby Hearn  
Vice President  
Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

Craig Howard  
Program Officer  
James Irvine Foundation

David Hornbeck  
Superintendent  
School District of Philadelphia

Otis Johnson  
Executive Director  
Chatham-Savannah  
Youth Futures Authority

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President  
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Douglas A. Nelson  
President  
Annie E. Casey Foundation

Terry Peterson  
Counselor to the Secretary  
U.S. Department of Education

Carol Rasco  
Assistant to the President for  
Domestic Policy  
The White House

Julius B. Richmond  
Department of Social Medicine  
Harvard University

Ron Register  
Executive Director  
Cleveland Community Building  
Initiative

Rebecca Riley  
Vice President  
John D. and Catherine T.  
MacArthur Foundation

Michael Stegman  
Assistant Secretary  
Policy Development and Research  
U.S. Department of Housing Develop.

Gary Walker  
President  
Public/Private Ventures

Valora Washington  
Vice President  
W.K. Kellogg Foundation

## **APPENDIX B: METHODOLOGY AND QUESTIONS**

### **Sample Selection**

For the purposes of this report, a comprehensive community initiative has three defining characteristics:

- It aims to promote positive change in individual, family and neighborhood circumstances
- It works to improve physical, economic and social conditions at the neighborhood level
- It places strong emphasis on community building and neighborhood empowerment

Working from this definition, the project team reviewed reports and consulted experts in the field to devise a list of comprehensive community initiatives from which to invite representatives for the peer group sessions. The team in no way pretends that the group of initiatives that eventually participated is exhaustive. Given the fluid parameters of the CCI definition, it inevitably represents only a sample of these efforts. Moreover, while some of the initiatives that were included may already be working on all of the above-stated goals, others may only be evolving in that direction. The project team believes that they are nonetheless illustrative of the field and that conclusions based on their experiences can speak legitimately for the field as a whole.

In the end, 18 CCIs were represented. In addition, four other community development corporations (CDCs) were invited to participate in the process because they generally conform to the criteria the team put forth for CCI designation and because of their rich history and experience.

### **Process**

The project team scheduled eleven one-day, peer-group sessions over the course of a two-month period, May 22- July 19, 1995. The classification for the peer groups and the number of sessions held per group are provided below:

- Funders (1 session)
- Directors (2 sessions)
- Participants in the governance structure of initiatives, such as board or collaborative members (2 sessions)
- Evaluators (1 session)
- Staff members (1 session)
- Residents of communities where initiatives are underway (2 sessions)
- Observers of the field, such as policy makers, technical assistance providers, and academicians (1 session)
- Roundtable members (1 session)

The project team identified all peer group participants except residents and members of governance structures, who were nominated by CCI directors or funders. Directors also nominated some of the staff members who participated. By the end of the process, the insights of 94 actors in the field had been solicited.

At least four members of the seven-member project team were present at any given session. Two members of the team were responsible for facilitating the discussion and two other members were responsible for distilling the information into preliminary synopses. Team members interchanged roles from session to session. Each session was taped and transcribed and discussants were granted anonymity to encourage their most forthright responses.

Prior to their attendance at the meeting, discussants were provided with a detailed list of written questions upon which to reflect. The questions, listed below, covered seven core issues:

- Comprehensiveness of program
- Community building
- Decision-making and governance
- Contextual dimensions that affect the unfolding of the CCI
- Financial, technical, and institutional support
- Interim markers of progress and ultimate outcomes
- Evaluation

Although the questions were tailored to each peer group classification, the essence of the questions remained the same across groups. However, midway through the process, questions were reorganized to allow the theme of community building, which had emerged as a central issue in early sessions, to be discussed more thoroughly in subsequent sessions.

Transcriptions of the sessions which were based on responses to the seven core categories (outlined above) served as the project's "raw data." The raw data were reviewed in conjunction with selective initiative documents and the team's preliminary synopses. After a review of the material in its totality, the team reorganized the data into the format presented in this report.

Discussants were asked to speak from personal experiences. Because of the nature of CCIs, some of the discussants were actually speaking from experience in multiple roles. Moreover, a few of the participants had experience from more than one initiative and spoke from the perspective of the same role in multiple initiatives. This overlap in roles and initiative perspective added to the richness of the discussions.

## Sample of Questions

### 1. Comprehensiveness

*The purpose of this session is to explore lessons learned about the pros and cons of a comprehensive approach -- as opposed to focusing on specific sectors or problem areas -- and to explore the utility/feasibility of the concept of "synergy"*

*Questions to provoke your thinking:*

- Based on your experience, what conclusions/lessons would you draw about the best starting place for a community initiative? For example, what difference do you think it would make if an initiative started out focusing on social services and then moved into economic development or vice versa? Is there a particular sequencing of program components that works better than others?
- How much emphasis should CCIs place on trying to achieve "comprehensiveness"? In what ways has the concept facilitated various initiatives' efforts and in what ways has it hampered them?
- Do you have any evidence that there is synergy among various elements of a comprehensive initiative, and, if so, how would you characterize it? What strategies have people used to achieve it?
- Under which circumstances -- for example, level of community resources, type of outside support and so on -- would you say that notions of comprehensiveness and synergy are most useful? When are they not?
- Other general lessons about comprehensiveness?

### 2. Governance

*The purpose of this session is to explore lessons learned about the forms and structures of governance that work best to promote various governance objectives*

*Questions to provoke your thinking:*

- What attributes of the governance structure of community initiatives work best to promote (or inhibit):
  - \* Community participation in the planning, management, and implementation of the initiative
  - \* Collaboration among institutions and organizations
  - \* Efficient and effective decision-making
  - \* Getting the work done
  - \* Legitimacy within and beyond the community
  - \* Accountability
- What are the effects, both positive and negative, of engaging community members in the governance of an initiative on its implementation, impact, legitimacy and sustainability?

- Based on your experience, do you think that different types of governance structures might work better during different phases of an initiative, and, if so, how best to engineer the evolution of a governance structure?
- Based on your experience, what would you see as the tradeoffs associated with creating a new structure (e.g., a neighborhood collaborative) for carrying out the work of the CCI as opposed to working through an existing “lead” organization?
- How would your recommendations about types of governance structures vary according to the level of social organization in a community, the capacity of existing community institutions, and so on?
- Other general lessons about governance?

### 3. Leadership Development and Community Building

***The purpose of this session is to explore lessons learned about strategies for building “community” and developing local capacity for community improvement***

*Questions to provoke your thinking:*

- Which strategies followed by community initiatives have been most effective for developing individual, organizational and community level capacity for identifying and implementing solutions to local problems?
- In your experience, is there generally agreement among all the participants in an initiative about the community building (or empowerment) aspects of the initiative -- its definition, its importance, the strategies for achieving it?
- Based on your experience, do you think that community building should be an end in and of itself, or should it be viewed as an instrument for achieving social and economic outcomes?
- Based on your experience, what lessons can you draw about how program strategies and objectives should differ given different pre-existing levels of social organization and types of community leadership? How should they evolve over time?
- How do other neighborhood dynamics, such as race and class, influence the community building agenda, either positively or negatively?
- Other general lessons about community building?

### 4. Context

***The purpose of this session is to explore the contextual factors which facilitate or hinder comprehensive community initiatives and the extent to which CCIs can have an impact on the larger system***

*Questions to provoke your thinking:*

- What kinds of support from local and state government have been most important to CCIs? What aspects of the public sector’s operations have been most harmful?
- How well do the CCIs interact with other ongoing initiatives in particular neighborhoods?

- Based on your experience, are there certain macroeconomic or political contextual factors which must be in place for an initiative to thrive? Are there certain contexts in which a CCI should not be attempted?
- In what ways are the policy changes in Washington likely to affect the current generation of CCIs, positively or negatively, and what changes might you recommend that they adopt in response?
- Based on your experience, how much should systems reform be an objective of CCIs?
- How do the following characteristics of a neighborhood affect the unfolding of an initiative:
  - \* Existence of physical, organizational, human or capital resources
  - \* Size of neighborhood
  - \* Physical characteristics
  - \* Ethnic, racial, cultural dynamics
  - \* Degree of cohesion, neighborhood identification, and social capital
  - \* Connection to larger social, economic and political community
- Other general lessons about context?

## 5. Financial and technical support

***The purpose of this session is to attempt to distill lessons about the kinds of technical, human and financial resources that are most important for CCI success***

*Questions to provoke your thinking:*

- Are CCIs generally funded at the correct level? What does the funding “buy,” and is it allocated appropriately? What recommendation would you make to funders of future initiatives about level of funding, flexibility of funding, duration of funding, purpose for which funds can be used, and review/accountability procedures?
- Based on your experience, what roles, beyond providing financial support, are most helpful/harmful for a funder to play?
- What are the ways in which technical assistance on “process” issues -- such as outreach, leadership development, planning -- have been most helpful to CCIs? In what ways has it been harmful?
- What are the ways in which technical assistance on substantive issues -- such as development financing, child development, neighborhood safety -- have been most helpful to CCIs? In what ways has it been harmful?
- What lessons have you learned about staffing CCIs with respect to types of training, interpersonal skills, level of professionalism, knowledge of the community, cultural issues? What are the critical functions of the initiative staff?
- What kinds of technical support have greatly aided community initiatives initiative, such as MIS or other data-based activities, participation in cross-site discussions, and so on?
- Other general lessons about outside support?

## 6. Evaluation and Outcomes

***The purpose of this session is to explore those aspects of the evaluation process that have been most helpful and most problematic and to distill any lessons about markers of progress***

*Questions to provoke your thinking:*

- What aspects of current evaluation strategies are most helpful in terms of:
  - \* managing the initiative
  - \* assessing progress toward outcomes
  - \* reporting to funders and the outside world
  - \* community building
- In what ways does evaluation cause problems?
- Who sets the outcomes for which initiatives are held accountable?
- What are appropriate long-term outcomes to seek in terms of impact on individuals and families, community change, organizational change, system change?
- What shorter term indicators of progress are most useful? Which are most easily measured?
- Are there “negative” markers, that is, markers that indicate that the initiative is not working?
- Other general lessons about outcomes?

7. General reflections

- Is the current generation of community initiatives significantly different from those of the past (e.g., community development corporations)? How and in what ways? What lessons have they learned and what have they missed?
- If the director of a new initiative asked you for the most important lesson that you have learned about comprehensive community initiatives, what would you say?
- What do you anticipate will be the most difficult challenges facing CCIs during the next year? The next five years?

## APPENDIX C: PARTICIPANTS BY PEER GROUP

### **Evaluators**

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\*Nominating Agency

## **Neighborhood Residents**

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### ***J. Allen Stokes***

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\* Nominating Agency

**APPENDIX D:**  
**Descriptions of Initiatives that Participated in**  
**Focus Group Discussions, June-July 1995**

This is a sample of the initiative descriptions. The remainder are  
currently under review by the initiatives themselves.

## **AGENDA FOR CHILDREN TOMORROW**

The Agenda For Children Tomorrow (ACT) aims to develop and strengthen neighborhood-based, family-focused services for low-income people in New York City. ACT was initiated by representatives of the philanthropic, government, health care, human services, legal and business communities and began its implementation phase in 1990 when Mayor David Dinkins formally endorsed the project. Officially adopted by Mayor Giuliani's administration in 1994, ACT will continue for at least another four years and, beyond that, for as long as it receives mayoral support.

### **Governance**

ACT's 70-member Oversight Group is composed of city commissioners, state liaisons from the Governor's Office, various foundation and nonprofit sector executives, union officials, and consumer and private sector representatives. The Oversight Group approves neighborhood selection, sets policy for the initiative, and connects ACT's staff to experts on particular citywide issues. The ACT Project Coordinator and staff are housed in the Mayor's Office.

Of the ten neighborhoods selected by ACT, five have operational collaboratives made up of health, economic development and social service providers and consumers. Each collaborative hired a local planner to assist in community organizing and strategic plan development. In seven of the neighborhoods, ACT is working in collaboration with a statewide initiative called the Neighborhood Based Alliance (NBA). The order in which ACT and NBA targeted the neighborhoods determines which initiative takes the lead in development. In four of the neighborhoods, ACT established itself first. The other three were first targeted by the NBA and later by ACT. The Fund for the City of New York, a foundation with a program to incubate nonprofit organizations, is paid by ACT to provide it with corporate status and arrange benefits for its consultants and local planners.

### **Focus, Philosophy and Actions**

ACT supports existing neighborhood-based service networks and facilitates the creation of new ones to undertake comprehensive service planning and implementation of new delivery systems. The new systems will include health, housing, child welfare, job training, mental health, youth and economic development services. The initiative also aims to make government health and human services more accessible and responsive (community driven) and to increase community involvement in service reform. Neither a demonstration program nor a narrowly targeted project, ACT intends eventually to encompass all 59 New York City community districts.

### **Funding**

ACT's first four years of funding - approximately \$1.5 million - came from fifteen different corporate and private foundations and was administered through the New York Community Trust. The Trust and the United Way were the initiative's first funders. The length of commitment varies for each foundation, but ACT continues to solicit and receive funds. Local planners are encouraged to become self-sufficient by acquiring matching funds; some have been awarded government grants. ACT also receives approximately \$100,000 worth of in-kind support per year in the form of office space/equipment and training services from the city and state governments. Recently the individual collaboratives have received significant private and government support.

## **APPENDIX D: DESCRIPTIONS OF PARTICIPATING INITIATIVES**

### **AGENDA FOR CHILDREN TOMORROW**

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training services from the city and state governments. Recently the individual collaboratives have received significant private and government support.

#### Evaluation

The Ford Foundation took responsibility for designing an evaluation for ACT. In collaboration with Public Private Ventures, an evaluation firm, Ford intends to develop both process and impact evaluations for the initiative's implementation phase. At the neighborhood level, local planners are responsible for a formative evaluation. Since the start of the initiative, they have been tracking progress on ten selected goals and documenting barriers in planning and implementation.

ACT staff maintains a chronological account of initiative activities and has recently inventoried accomplishments in each of the neighborhoods where ACT is underway. That inventory includes the following:

- o ACT assisted in developing the 24 hour New York City Youthline. By keeping track of programs and services, Youthline provides an accurate picture of what is available and what is needed in every City neighborhood.
- o Bushwick ACT obtained a Certificate of Occupancy Waiver from the Department of Health, allowing the Salvation Army to begin construction on an infant day care center.
- o ACT helped guide the deployment of community schools and family preservation sites through its needs assessment work.
- o The Community Development Agency funded three ACT sites for \$120,000 each.
- o \$1.5 million per year for job development was awarded to Mott and Washington Heights by New York Community Trust.
- o \$17 million over 5 years was awarded by the Department of Health and Human Services to New York State Office Mental Health and Mott .
- o ACT helped pull together different layers of government and health care providers to enable the submission of a unified application for health and safety funds from the RWJ Foundation.
- o ACT is a finalist with the Mayor s Office of Communal Justice in a Justice Department Safe Futures grant for Washington Heights. The grant is \$1 million per year for three years.

For more information, please contact:

Eric Brettschneider  
c/o The Mayor's Office  
250 Broadway, Room #1412  
New York, NY 10007  
(212) 788-6757

## THE ATLANTA PROJECT

Former President Jimmy Carter initiated The Atlanta Project (TAP) to help urban communities gain access to the resources they need to solve the problems that most concern them. Grounded in The Carter Center's problem-solving philosophy, TAP seeks to empower citizens to develop solutions to problems they identify in their neighborhoods. TAP fosters collaboration among government agencies, other service providers, people who want to help, and those who need help.

TAP physically includes approximately 500,000 residents in the cities of Atlanta and Decatur, and parts of Fulton, DeKalb, and Clayton Counties. Twenty neighborhood clusters are coordinated around high schools and the elementary and middle schools that feed into them. Approximately 25,000 people live in a cluster area.

### Governance

A program director and program administrator operate TAP on a day-to-day basis. A policy advisory board comprised of local business, government and community leaders make policy for TAP. At the cluster level, a cluster coordinator (who must reside in the area) and assistant work with the resident steering committee to develop a strategic plan that includes initiatives residents want to implement. A team of resource coordinators assist residents in their efforts to strengthen their communities. Resource coordinators are paid professionals or loaned executives from various corporations, government agencies, health organizations and universities with expertise in TAP's focus areas. The clusters also receive assistance from volunteers.

### Focus, Philosophy and Actions

The vision of TAP is a city united to inspire hope and opportunity for all its citizens. The mission is to unite Atlanta as a community working to improve the quality of life in our neighborhoods. TAP's goals are to enhance the quality of life in urban communities; to empower residents to take the lead in bringing about change in their communities; to unite Atlanta along race, class and gender lines; to foster collaboration among service providers, clients and other groups; and to be a model for other cities embarking on similar initiatives.

To address problems associated with poverty on a community-wide basis, TAP focuses on six areas: children, youth, and families, economic development, education, health, housing, and public safety. The core values of TAP are empowerment, community initiative, volunteerism, collaboration, comprehensiveness, prevention, and diversity. This vision, coupled with the areas of focus, have allowed TAP to accomplish the following:

- o TAP brought ten federal agencies and a state agency together to streamline the paperwork for those needing federal assistance. The application process for six federal social service programs has been reduced from 68 pages to eight. With the Georgia Common Access Application (GCAA) applicants only go to one agency to apply for Medicaid, AFDC, WIC, Housing Assistance, Food Stamps and Social Security Supplemental assistance administered by separate agencies.
- o Another collaborative effort was the creation of a Housing Resource Center. With the assistance of the Atlanta Housing Association of Neighborhood Developers, Atlanta Neighborhood Development Partnership and the Neighborhood Reinvestment Corporation, this center provides services to cluster communities and community development corporations involved in affordable housing initiatives.

o An \$11.5 million Entrepreneurial Development Loan Fund was established in collaboration with six banks and the Atlanta Chamber of Commerce. This fund enables entrepreneurs, who are not eligible for a traditional loan, to qualify for loans. Because the effort is directed at economic development, there is a special but not exclusive focus on working with companies in TAP's boundaries.

## Funding

TAP has a five-year operating budget of \$32.8 million -- \$20 million in cash and \$12.8 million of in-kind contributions. The cash is allocated for staff and specific projects in clusters. All of TAP's funding comes from corporations and foundations, not from the government. An example of a major in-kind contribution is the Carter Collaboration Center. Most of the center -- carpet, furniture, computers, telephones, and fixtures -- was built and finished with donations from local companies.

Partnerships are a key component of TAP. There are more than four-dozen corporate and academic partners. Partnerships are unique to the cluster because each community has different needs and partners have varying resources. Corporate partners generally make a cash contribution to support TAP's overall administration and supply an executive to work full-time with a specific cluster for a specified period of time. In addition to their relationship with specific communities, corporations also support TAP on a project-wide basis.

## Evaluation

TAP was reviewed by a team of evaluators based out of Emory University and is in the process of detailing its successes and failures, and sharing the lessons learned with other cities. Like many comprehensive initiatives, TAP's complexity and scope remain difficult to evaluate because it is both an initiative and a collection of initiatives involving multiple sites, levels, and foci. Since the evaluation, it has been determined that TAP will continue into a second phase, however the direction of phase II has yet to be determined.

TAP has learned a great deal in its first three and half years. TAP does not claim to have all the answers, or the solution for eliminating urban decay. It has not solved the problem of unemployment; but it is working to create conditions that are ripe for economic development, entrepreneurship, and job creation. It has not solved the problems of juvenile violence, but it is looking at ways of getting youth involved in constructive and productive programs. TAP has not solved the homeless problem, but it is working with housing providers to keep some residents in structurally sound, clean, safe, and affordable housing. What TAP has done is come to understand that community involvement is a critical component in achieving true empowerment. The community must be empowered to act, initiate, make decisions and respond.

For more information about The Atlanta Project please contact The America Project:

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Information is also accessible through the Internet. Contact the Carter Center home page at:  
[http://www.emory.edu/Carter\\_Center/](http://www.emory.edu/Carter_Center/) Information about The America Project can also be found on  
HandsNet in Children, Youth and Families/Comprehensive Strategies/Comprehensive Initiatives.

## THE AUSTIN INITIATIVE

The Austin Initiative, launched by the Shorebank Corporation in 1990, aims to alleviate poverty in the Austin neighborhood in Chicago by creating a competitive local economy and preparing the resident labor force to take advantage of economic improvements. The Shorebank Corporation, a bank holding company, is dedicated to restoring market forces in disinvested communities for the benefit of their residents. Shorebank has made an open ended commitment to the initiative.

### Governance

With the aid of professional researchers, Shorebank and its affiliates developed a detailed, three-volume analysis of the approaches to alleviate poverty in Austin. In September 1991, Shorebank convened an eleven-member organizing committee to determine how to implement the strategy. The committee, composed of representatives of major social, educational, and community organizations in Austin, as well as two Shorebank representatives, became the board of the Austin Labor Force Intermediary (ALFI) in 1993. ALFI is charged with carrying out the initiative's labor force development activities. Although staffed by the Shorebank Corporation, ALFI is an independent organization with its own fiscal management structure. Shorebank Enterprise oversees implementation of the initiative's business development activities. Shorebank Enterprise has its own advisory board comprised of local business people and Shorebank managers.

### Focus, Philosophy, and Actions

The initiative intends to increase both the demand for and supply of labor within Austin by stabilizing the neighborhood's manufacturing base and developing the job skills of its residents. It aims to retain manufacturing through marketing efforts, technology transfer, and the provision of nontraditional financial products. ALFI's mode of operation is to collaborate whenever possible with existing Austin service providers to strengthen their capacity while achieving specific labor force development objectives. To drive these projects, ALFI has established the following service units:

1. Career Services, which holds neighborhood employment workshops, develops collaborative training and employment ventures with local businesses and community organizations, and brokers job leads with Shorebank Enterprise.
2. The Worker Support Network, which establishes peer groups of residents through churches and other local host organizations to maintain members on their path to self sufficiency.
3. School Services, which is working to make long-term, systemic improvements in Austin's public schools through school-to-work activities, strategic planning, and community-wide education advocacy.
4. Resident Services, which provides enrichment and development activities to residents of buildings managed by Shorebank.

### Funding

Currently, major funders include the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the Chicago Community Trust, the Ford Foundation, the MacArthur Foundation, and the Mott Foundation. The initiative also has contracts with the Mayor's Office of Employment and Training, Chicago's Department of Human Services, and the Illinois State Board of Education. Shorebank Corporation provides direct and in-kind support. The initiative's five-year budget is estimated at \$7 million.

Evaluation

Minneapolis-based Rainbow Research has been contracted to conduct a first-year process evaluation of the initiative.

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## COMMUNITY BUILDING INITIATIVE

Created in 1979, Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) is the nation's largest national nonprofit community development intermediary, channeling private investment from corporations and foundations as loans and equity supporting Community Development Corporations' (CDCs) efforts to rebuild inner city neighborhoods. LISC's Community Building Initiative (CBI) is a new program to assist nonprofit CDCs' efforts to rebuild their neighborhoods socially as well as physically. By providing a combination of technical and financial assistance, LISC hopes to strengthen CDCs' abilities to act as "mediating institutions" in their communities—organizing residents to identify priorities and set local agendas, and working in collaboration with a range of public and private agencies to address neighborhood problems and respond to opportunities.

At present, LISC is working with 31 CDCs and anticipates selecting 5 more CDCs in the eleven cities receiving CBI support. LISC has intentionally selected a cross-section of CDCs representing varying size, sophistication, target populations, and type of project experience. The intention is to have a range of CDC types, to demonstrate different models of community building and where possible, draw conclusions about which models work best for different types of organizations.

Among the CBI multi-CDC CBI sites are Chicago, Kansas City, St. Paul, Washington, Detroit, Indianapolis, Los Angeles, and Philadelphia. The single-CDC sites include Miami, New York City, and Phoenix. LISC program officer in each of those cities have been hired to manage each multi-CDC site and have selected CDCs and their CBI programs and projects.

### Governance

In consultation with senior LISC management, the CBI Program Director and her staff select target sites, provide national technical assistance for CBI sites, promote communication and information-sharing among grantees, publicize the citywide initiatives, and manage overall implementation. At the local level, LISC program officers are responsible for nominating CDCs for funding, reviewing their proposals, arranging site visits for the Program Director, raising local funds, linking CDCs to institutional partners in the various substantive areas, and assisting the CDCs with actual planning and implementation.

### Focus, Philosophy and Actions

Through CBI, LISC is supporting CDC programs that truly engage residents in defining problems and identifying solutions, focus on issues widely regarded within the community as pressing, foster broad collaborations among community organizations and public and private institutions, and address community programs in a targeted fashion to achieve tangible results.

CBI is designed to help CDCs respond to the breakdown of informal and institutional support structures within the neighborhoods they serve. CBI focuses on the capacity of CDCs to organize residents and institutions around a broad range of social programs. CDCs are ideally positioned to engage residents and institutions in a process of identifying pressing issues of security, health care, youth services, day care, and other needs. By undertaking specific programmatic responses to these problems, CDCs can bolster their credibility and build new relationships in the community.

CBI does not seek to encourage CDCs to become human service providers, but to foster relationships between CDCs and the range of human service providers, public and private, that operate in lower income neighborhoods, and to create a climate where better human services are delivered. CBI is also action-oriented. While it supports resident-driven planning processes, most of the CBI funds are reserved for initiatives that will demonstrate tangible results that both improve the lives of neighborhood residents and foster the larger goal of community stability. Local CBI programs have chosen the following areas to address:

- o Chicago: youth employment, youth recreation, anti-drug organizing
- o Detroit: housing/service coordination in CDC-owned housing sites
- o Indianapolis: home health care, employment, youth services
- o Kansas City: conflict resolution through consensus organizing
- o Los Angeles: health care, employment
- o Miami: youth, crime, community organizing
- o New York: health care, youth violence
- o Philadelphia: health care, employment
- o Phoenix: service/housing coordination
- o St. Paul: youth, crime, service/housing coordination
- o Washington: health care, employment

To sharpen the skills of field staff and increase their knowledge of, and access to, community building experts, CBI manages an on-line CBI Forum through HandsNet for use by the national and field staff and the CDCs. National CBI staff has installed HandsNet at LISC's national headquarters in New York and in each of the field offices administering CBI programs. CDCs participating in the program are being encouraged to install HandsNet and to participate in the CBI Forum. The National CBI Program Officer is providing HandsNet/CBI Forum training sessions to CDCs on a city by city basis. By March 1996, LISC anticipates that over 25 CDCs will be connected to the on-line CBI Forum.

## Funding

There are two "windows" through which CBI operates: (1) LISC provides assistance to a group of CDCs in a given city, and (2) LISC makes planning and implementation grants to individual CDCs with especially promising initiatives. Through CBI, LISC prefers to fund "citywide" CBI programs with multiple CDCs, because such efforts build local institutional capacity, have the potential to leverage greater resources, and are most conducive to cross-fertilization of ideas and technology among CBI grantees.

In most of the citywide sites, LISC will provide up to \$540,000 in national grant funds over a three year period. Each city will match funds with an equal amount in local funds. The total pools will support an average of four CDCs in each city over a three-year period, with CDCs receiving between \$40,000 and \$100,000 annually depending upon the scope of their work. Grant dollars will be used first to support a resident-driven planning process (facilitated by a consultant if necessary); and then hire CDC staff to implement program priorities arising as a result of planning. CBI funds can be used by the CDCs for the planning and implementation costs of implementing their CBI projects.

In three additional cities, LISC will provide up to \$200,000 in national grant funds over a three-year period, to support one or two CDCs at the same funding level as described above.

In addition to the grant funding, each city will also have access to PRI funds from NCDI on an as needed basis for the purpose of constructing community facilities identified in the course of community planning exercises. Facilities are projected to include health centers, day care centers, and multi-purpose facilities which may house recreational or educational programs.

LISC's CBI program has been supported by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the Ford Foundation, the Mott Foundation, Pew Charitable Trusts, Freddie Mac, the Prudential Foundation, the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the Department of Housing and Urban Development, and the consortium of funders participating in the National Community Development Initiative.

#### Evaluation

The program evaluation will maximize feedback and learning. At the end of the three-year demonstration effort, national LISC will disseminate program results and provide policy support.

LISC envisions three important characteristics of a CBI program evaluation:

- \* learning: using the CBI evaluation to test concepts of community building, inform the community development field about the mechanisms and components of effective community building, and emphasize CBI program outputs (the quantitative measurement of program actions) and outcomes (the community consequences resulting from the program);
- \* participation: empowering communities not only to organize, plan, deliver services, and strengthen community institutions, but to engage in critical self-examination of what they are doing and how well they are succeeding;
- \* process: capturing the dynamic of community building and the outcomes that emerge from the community-building process, toward rebuilding the fabric of communities.

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## COMMUNITY BUILDING IN PARTNERSHIP

Community Building in Partnership (CBP), a "neighborhood transformation" initiative, was launched in 1990 by the residents of the Sandtown-Winchester neighborhood in Baltimore, the Baltimore City government, and The Enterprise Foundation. Now formally incorporated as CBP, Inc., the partnership's vision is the total transformation of the failing systems and conditions that have made Sandtown-Winchester (known locally as Sandtown) one of Baltimore's most deteriorated neighborhoods from education, health and human services to housing, employment and economic development.

### Governance

CBP, Inc. is led by an executive director with a full-time administrative staff of 8, and a program staff of 25. The Enterprise Foundation and city government contribute another 10-15 staff and consultants to the initiative. The staff includes many Sandtown residents who are in charge of such areas as community gardening, public safety, editing and writing a community newspaper, and operating a food and clothing bank. CBP Inc.'s Board of Directors has 19 members, a majority of whom are neighborhood residents. The City of Baltimore and The Enterprise Foundation are represented on the board.

### Focus, Philosophy and Actions

CBP's efforts have been concentrated in eight basic areas; actions in each area are summarized below.

- o Housing and Open Space -- 1,000 units of housing have been newly constructed or refurbished and another 600 vacant units are under development. Three playgrounds have been refurbished and 23 gardens have been planted.
- o Education -- A new, nationally recognized curriculum is being introduced in the schools with complementary professional development for the teachers. A compact among the school system, teachers and residents has been executed that shares responsibility for managing the schools, developing and implementing the new curriculum, fostering an environment of life-long learning, and preparing students for school.
- o Health Care -- Appropriate care is available to all pregnant women and young infants and health clinics have been opened in three elementary schools for students. A consortium of five private and public health care providers has been organized to deliver needed comprehensive care.
- o Employment -- Over 200 adults have been employed in the transformation process and another 250 have received employment or skills training. Over 500 youth have had summer jobs. A neighborhood-based assessment, training and placement center has been established. Sandtown-Winchester has been included in the new federally designated Empowerment Zone, which emphasizes employment efforts.
- o Human Services -- A community center has been opened in Sandtown-Winchester offering adult education, after-school and recreation programs for youth, services for seniors and a family advocacy program for outreach, referrals and support to families in crisis.
- o Public Safety -- Fifteen known drug houses have been closed and violent crime was reduced 16% in one year. Over 100 block clubs have been organized to fight crime.

- o Commercial/Retail Development -- Management authority for the municipal market has been turned over to a non-profit corporation charged with its redevelopment. Two new drugstore have opened on the retail avenue.
- o Community Building -- Over 1,700 new voters have been registered. A community newspaper with a readership of over 10,000 is published monthly. A regular calendar of community events ranging from a Halloween Pumpkin Patch, a summer arts festival and a volunteer appreciate banquet is maintained.

#### Funding

All of the partners work together to raise funds for CBP. To date, about \$12 million has been raised from national and local foundations and corporations to support CBP planning and the start-up of program implementation. The City of Baltimore makes available considerable in-kind support, as does The Enterprise Foundation.

#### Evaluation

The Enterprise Foundation helped assemble a team to formally document the neighborhood transformation process, evaluate all programs and provide internal feedback. The first year evaluation report is presently being completed.

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## COMPREHENSIVE COMMUNITY REVITALIZATION PROGRAM

The Comprehensive Community Revitalization Program (CCRP) is a demonstration that expands upon the efforts of five community development corporations (CDCs) in the South Bronx, which are responsible for over \$600 million of housing. By providing them with grants, technical assistance, and training, CCRP supports community-building activities as well as the development of basic services and facilities for families and children, anti-crime work with the police, strategic and physical planning, and major economic development and open space projects. The CDCs undertook action planning together and began implementation of priority projects in 1992. A collaboration of thirteen foundations supports CCRP.

### Governance

CCRP's central oversight body is composed of representatives from the 13 foundations who function in an advisory capacity. The Surdna Foundation exercises expenditure responsibility for grants from other sources. At the neighborhood level, the non-profit CDCs have great flexibility in determining the projects they will carry out with CCRP funds, while decisions about program-wide initiatives are made collectively. CCRP was selected for the New York State Neighborhood Based Alliance (NBA), and thus transformed into a public/private partnership. The NBA, designed as a ground-up program, provides special access to state funding and waivers. The CDCs serve as lead agencies for the NBA neighborhood collaboratives they have formed. A change in state leadership has brought with it dim prospects for the future of NBA.

### Focus, Philosophy, and Actions

CCRP aims to turn neighborhoods into fully engaged and functional communities with CDCs serving as organizers, facilitators and implementors of integrated strategies. Each CDC is charged with coordinating existing services and bringing critically needed facilities, services and programs to the neighborhood. A CCRP-funded case management and MIS system will aid them in this effort. The programs and services on which the CDCs focus include primary health care, center-based and home-based Head Start and day care, school/community programs for students and parents, parenting and self-esteem programs, referrals to other services, neighborhood housing rehabilitation, work preparation and placement programs, new business ventures and retail facilities, and the collaboration of community and police to create safer neighborhoods and open spaces, such as playgrounds, parks and community gardens. CCRP emphasizes resident economic self-sufficiency and is enhancing the capacity of CDCs to do assessments of work preparation, referrals and follow-up and to help residents gain access to the job market. Hundreds of people from the neighborhoods have been involved in developing the Strategic Plans and Quality of Life Physical Plans for the neighborhoods. Resident and youth councils, focus groups and collaboratives are now working with every CDC neighborhood.

An overview of progress to date includes:

- o The American Planning Association has selected CCRP for its first annual Presidential Planning Award.
- o Four new primary health care practices located in CDC buildings are now in operation, while a fifth is under construction. One additional practice will go forward under the city's Primary Care Development Initiative.

- o Plans for economic development projects are advancing. One CDC, designated by the City to develop a \$28 million shopping center, has received CCRP and Bankers Trust support along with \$800,000 in federal grants for the project and an initial commitment of \$3.5 million in equity from the LISC TRI (Retail Initiative). Another CDC has been awarded a \$125,000 federal grant and a Bankers Trust loan and grant for a CCRP-assisted catering enterprise, while a third has opened a successful neighborhood thrift shop.
- o CCRP has contracted with FECS for a professional who is working full-time with CDC staff to start and operate a comprehensive self-sufficiency program of scale that is bringing over a dozen new English as a Second Language (ESL) and GED classes to under-served neighborhoods, creating new partnerships with exemplary employment training providers, and building CDC capacity to assist residents seeking a path to employment.
- o New child care programs for some 300 children have been created by four CDCs. One day care center opened its doors in early 1994, and a Head Start Center serving five CDCs combines both center-based and home-based programs for 130 children and employment services for their parents. Budgeted at nearly \$1 million annually, it became operational in early 1995. One CDC is pioneering a home-based Head Start program that incorporates Home Instruction for Pre-School Youth (HIPPO) and job counseling, while another CDC is operating a privately-funded HIPPO that is fully integrated with a battery of social and health services offered by the CDC.
- o Four CDCs joined forces under the CCRP banner to win a \$320,000 award from HUD's Hope II program to prepare tenants of 401 units in city-owned buildings for cooperative ownership.
- o A new micro loan fund supported by a \$50,000 Citibank grant will be launched by two CDCs and their neighborhood's community credit union.
- o Three CDCs are receiving technical assistance and grants totaling \$600,000 from the federal Urban Resources Partnership for open space projects identified in their physical plans.
- o The Comprehensive Employment Training Program (CET) in concert with two CDCs, is now operating a JTPA training program in the West Farms neighborhood, while another CDC has embarked on a training program with the hotel industry association as its partner.
- o One CDC has been designated for a \$1 million HHS youth award for its Hands that Build the Future program.

(For a more complete list of activities, see the CCRP sub-folder in this Forum.)

## Funding

The Surdna Foundation took the lead in developing CCRP and has since been joined by 12 other foundations. Together they have committed \$7.5 million to the program. Although no New York City funds are committed to CCRP directly, CCRP receives City support for categorical programs. For example, one CDC is now operating a City Beacon Program which funds the conversion of a school into a community center during after-school hours; a second is operating a 139-slot Head Start program that serves CCRP participants and CDC open space projects have city support. Some \$5 million of CCRP funds, spent largely for new CDC staff, technical assistance and for the start-up of projects, have already

leveraged approximately \$30 million (exclusive of housing) for implementation of physical and strategic plan elements while creating 276 new jobs.

#### Evaluation

CCRP has contracted with the Organization and Management Group (OMG), headquartered in Philadelphia, to assess the initiative. The assessment is intended to document CCRP as it progresses; determine the potential of the premise that supporting mature CDCs as neighborhood intermediaries is an effective approach for achieving comprehensive neighborhood change; and assess the significance of this effort and its potential for replication on a national scale. Among the key questions to be answered are: What did the five participating CDCs do? Did they make a difference? And why? The final report is anticipated in late 1996. The second annual assessment report was issued in June 1995 and is available to the public.

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## **THE CHILDREN, FAMILIES, AND COMMUNITY INITIATIVE**

The Children, Families, and Communities Initiative (CFCI) represents a vision of community ownership and decision making that challenges neighborhood poverty and its impact on child development in the context of family and community. Located in the Frogtown and Summit-University neighborhoods of St. Paul, Minnesota, CFCI is a non-traditional, long term, community-based grantmaking program of the F.R. Bigelow Foundation that seeks to improve the spiritual, emotional, cognitive, social, and physical development of children by strengthening family units and building healthy communities. The Initiative discourages exclusive reliance on professionals and established social service agencies and instead gives residents opportunities to do things for themselves. Begun in 1990, it has completed two years of planning and three years of implementation.

### **Governance**

Represented by a multi-cultural and economically diverse twenty-five member Steering Committee, CFCI embodies the capacity, values and beliefs of residents and workers from the most ethnically, socially, and economically diverse neighborhoods in St. Paul. The Committee advises the Bigelow Foundation where to allocate Initiative funds. It recommends grants of up to \$25,000 for resident-controlled groups that promote community empowerment, self-determination, leadership development and capacity building. A representative of the Foundation attends Committee meetings but is not a voting member.

The Steering Committee will continue to focus its grantmaking on social capacity issues and expansion on external issues that impact child and family development, neighborhood empowerment and policy change. The ongoing and long-term development of CFCI will be an operational priority for the Steering Committee and represents the continued partnership of the F.R. Bigelow Foundation and the engagement of new partners that support the vision and mission of CFCI.

### **Focus, Philosophy, and Actions**

By putting program decision-making into the hands of those who will gain the most from neighborhood improvement, the Initiative strives for real community ownership and resident empowerment. The first five years of the Initiative focused on internal processes of developing policies and procedures, recruitment of Steering Committee members, hiring of staff and implementation of the grantmaking program that focused on social capacity issues. The Foundation views CFCI as a test of community ownership, self-determination, grassroots problem-solving, and neighborhood empowerment.

### **Funding**

The F.R. Bigelow Foundation has allocated \$2.5 million over five years for grants of up to \$25,000 to each resident-controlled group. Initial grants were made in 1990, and by the end of 1995, CFCI will have awarded \$1.5 million in grants to over 100 groups representing new efforts by grassroots organizations to improve the lives of children in the two neighborhoods. In the fall of 1995, the F.R. Bigelow Board of Trustees approved the authorization of an additional \$2.5 million to continue the Initiative through the year 2000. Of the \$2.5 million, one million dollars is for operational support and another \$1.5 million for grantmaking over the next five years.

### **Evaluation**

The Foundation decided to continue its commitment based on a comprehensive evaluation that concludes that CFCI is a promising new way of grantmaking, investing authority in community groups, developing social capital in inner-city neighborhoods and creating long term relationships between foundations and inner-city neighborhoods.

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## DUDLEY STREET NEIGHBORHOOD INITIATIVE

The Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative (DSNI) fosters multi-racial collaboration and grassroots organizing to bring about comprehensive, community-controlled redevelopment of the Dudley neighborhood in Boston. Its mission is to empower residents to organize, plan for, create and control a vibrant, high quality, and diverse neighborhood in collaboration with community partners.

DSNI was formed in 1984 when residents of the Dudley Street neighborhood organized to address many years of disinvestment, environmental racism, arson, and the beginnings of land speculation with the potential for large-scale resident displacement. It is a membership organization, with over two thousand voting members in a neighborhood of 24,000 residents. Located two miles from downtown Boston in Roxbury/North Dorchester, the neighborhood is home to four major racial or ethnic groups: African-Americans, Latinos, Cape Verdeans and Whites.

### Governance

In 1984, with the support of the Mabel Louise Riley Foundation, approximately thirty community agencies were convened to form a coalition to develop a revitalization plan for the Dudley neighborhood. The proposed coalition's agency-exclusive governance structure was challenged by residents, who counter-proposed a resident-exclusive governance structure.

The compromise solution was a 31 member, resident-majority governing Board, composed of representatives from every segment of the neighborhood: 25 elected seats consisting of three representatives of each of the neighborhood's four racial/ethnic groups; two from local community development corporations; seven from local nonprofit and social service agencies; two from local small businesses; and two from local religious organizations. There are four additional seats appointed by the Board to ensure the full diversity of the neighborhood is reflected; since 1993 two of these seats have been filled by youth. Although the Board composition allows for one State and one City government representative, DSNI has never filled these seats. The Riley Foundation does not have a seat on the Board.

### Focus, Philosophy, and Actions

While recognizing the need to create a comprehensive, community driven redevelopment plan to counter the speculative pressures, DSNI also knew that some short term achievements would be necessary to engage the community. Accordingly, it began to organize residents to close the illegal trash transfer stations in the neighborhood and stop dumping on vacant lots. The community's success in these efforts created the energy and momentum that led to the 1987 Comprehensive Revitalization Plan for the Dudley Neighborhood, the product of a nine month effort engaging over 200 residents and community partners. This plan was adopted by the City of Boston as its official plan for redevelopment in the neighborhood.

The strength of the comprehensive plan lies in its recognition that rebuilding the physical elements of the neighborhood was only one part of a revitalization strategy, and that for new development to be effective, neighborhood residents would need to feel ownership and control of all elements in their lives. The plan created multiple strategies addressing a full range of community empowerment needs, such as valuing and strengthening ethnic pride; creating resident control of human service program priorities and resource allocation; and expanding child care and youth opportunities.

Since 1987, DSNi has worked to oversee the implementation, updating and refinement of the comprehensive plan. This work is focused in three areas: the creation of open planning and decision-making processes where residents participate as informed, equal partners with agencies and government representatives; the strengthening of existing community partners and creation of new partners to do the actual implementation of plan strategies; and organizing neighborhood residents and organizations to be an effective force in advocating for the neighborhood. The common theme in all its efforts is challenging the rules, assumptions, and systems that have worked to divide and oppress poor urban communities.

As an example, in 1988 DSNi became the first community group to be granted the power of eminent domain by a government agency, and created the Dudley Neighbors, Inc. land trust to ensure community control over development and prevent speculative displacement.

### Funding

The Riley Foundation has made a commitment to multi-year, long-term funding of DSNi. The exact length of its commitment has not been determined. In addition to regular annual support well in excess of \$100,000, the Foundation has allocated an average of over \$300,000 per year in special grants to the organizations and programs serving the Dudley area. This figure does not include some soft grants where the Dudley neighborhood could be identified as an indirect or minor beneficiary.

The Riley Foundation has also assisted DSNi in securing grants from foundations, corporations and government agencies. The Boston Foundation has been a steady backer of DSNi since its inception. Other key funders include the Hyams Foundation, the Kellogg Foundation, the Bank of Boston, State Street Bank, Shawmut Bank, and the Veatch Foundation. DSNi secured a \$2 million PRI loan from the Ford Foundation for the community land trust to be used to finance land acquisition, and has received more than \$750,000 in pro bono legal and accounting assistance. DSNi's annual operating budget is approximately \$1 million. About 75% is raised from foundations, and the balance through other contributions and revenues.

DSNi has been selected as one of five sites nationally to participate in the Annie E. Casey Foundation's seven year Rebuilding Communities Initiative.

### Evaluation

The Riley Foundation does not have a formal outside evaluation process planned. Riley Foundation trustees meet regularly with DSNi members and receive progress reports on the specific uses of Foundation money. The Riley and Boston Foundations have established a monitoring system which provides DSNi a monitor to assist in systematically evaluating its quarterly progress in meeting established objectives. Ford also employs a monitor to oversee compliance with the terms of its land acquisition loan.

A book documenting the development of DSNi, "Streets of Hope: The Fall and Rise of an Urban Neighborhood," by Peter Medoff and Holly Sklar (South End Press, Boston) was published in April, 1994. A documentary on the Dudley Street neighborhood will be premiered in February 1996.

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## NEIGHBORHOOD AND FAMILY INITIATIVE

Launched by the Ford Foundation in 1990, the Neighborhood and Family Initiative (NFI) seeks to "revitalize and empower whole communities and the individuals and families who live in them." NFI is being implemented in a neighborhood in each of four cities: Detroit, Michigan; Hartford, Connecticut; Memphis, Tennessee; and Milwaukee, Wisconsin. The Initiative is now in its fifth year of operation.

### Governance

Ford chose a community foundation in each of the four cities to oversee Initiative activities. The community foundations were responsible for selecting a target neighborhood, hiring a project director, and recruiting representatives to serve on a governing body known as a "collaborative." Composed of neighborhood residents and civic-minded professionals from both within and beyond the target neighborhood, the collaboratives plan and monitor the implementation of NFI. Technical assistance is provided to the community foundations and collaboratives by the Center for Community Change (CCC) which is based in Washington, D.C. CCC helped NFI participants at each site develop a strategic plan, provides ongoing technical assistance, arranges cross-site conferences and facilitates the sharing of information across sites.

### Focus, Philosophy, and Actions

NFI is based on two main principles. The first is that neighborhood development projects should attempt to build on and integrate the relationships among social, physical, and economic needs and circumstances. The second principle is that residents and other individuals with a vested interest in the targeted neighborhood should actively participate in the planning and implementation of such a project. By serving on an NFI collaborative, residents and other stakeholders can help identify the neighborhoods' needs and provide access to existing internal and external resources.

All of the sites spent the first several years planning and surveying the communities. Since the projects began the implementation phase, however, sites have made a number of strides. The following is a partial list of actions thus far.

- o Community organizing activities in Hartford have resulted in several small projects: Project Lighten Up added outdoor lighting to numerous houses in the neighborhood. The FoodShares Project distributes produce grown in a garden around the area. The neighborhood bought a share in the garden and is entitled to a similar share of the vegetables. A summer program for children has also been operating for several summers. Adolescents from local school work with pre-school children in a family resource center learning science skills.
- o Created by the Memphis NFI collaborative, the Orange Mound Development Corporation (OMDC) is an incorporated entity created to help improve the availability of affordable housing in the neighborhood. OMDC rehabs housing as well as building new housing.
- o The Milwaukee collaborative has joined with four other community-based organizations to purchase over 33 acres of land vacated by the American Motors Company and develop it as an industrial park. The first parcel has been developed by Builder's Square, a hardware store, which agreed to target neighborhood residents in hiring. The industrial park also has instituted a training program for industrial jobs.

o The Martin Luther King Economic Development Corporation is a revolving loan fund for neighborhood individuals or businesses in Milwaukee. To date, the fund has made five loans to area small businesses.

## Funding

The Ford Foundation, through the administration of the community foundations, gave each site a \$125,000 planning grant for the first year plus a \$1,000,000 implementation grant for the following three years. Sites were expected to use this money to leverage funds from other sources. Ford also designated a pool of project-related investment funds to be made available through the collaboratives to neighborhood organizations whose work is consistent with the goals of NFI. The Structured Employment/Economic Development Corporation (Seedco) administers those funds. In addition, Ford has allocated \$1,591,000 over six years for technical assistance to the sites and for the facilitation of cross-site communication. Some of the sponsoring community foundations have contributed funds to the Initiative locally and, in some cases, have co-sponsored projects with the collaboratives through both grants and loan guarantees. Ford has provided additional funding to each site for 18-22 months beyond the first three-year implementation phase.

## Evaluation

NFI is being evaluated at two levels. A national evaluation is being conducted by the Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago. Chapin Hall will assess how well the general NFI approach works by documenting and analyzing the ways in which the four sites implement NFI and to what degree of success.

In addition, each site is responsible for a local evaluation to measure progress towards collaborative goals and desired outcomes. In this way, the local sites define project success and how to measure it within the context of their communities. Chapin Hall is offering technical assistance to the sites for the design of their local assessments.

In collaboration with participants in Hartford and Memphis, Chapin Hall has designed and implemented resident surveys at these two sites. The surveys focused primarily on residents' perceptions of and satisfaction with their neighborhood and of their roles within it.

For more information:

Reports describing the Initiative and analyzing its progress from the perspective of its guiding charge are available from the Chapin Hall Center for Children, 1313 E. 60th St., Chicago, IL 60637. Please call (312) 753-5900 or write to Publications at Chapin Hall for ordering information.

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## NEIGHBORHOOD PRESERVATION INITIATIVE

The Pew Charitable Trusts' Neighborhood Preservation Initiative (NPI) seeks to learn how best to assist residents of diverse working-class neighborhoods strengthen the social, physical and economic assets and capacities that make neighborhoods healthy and viable, and to help residents overcome factors that put their neighborhoods at risk of blight and deterioration. Its goals are to determine what types of strategies are likely to work, build the long-term capacity of neighborhood residents to engage in neighborhood preservation, and stimulate future investments in working-class neighborhoods.

In October 1994, NPI selected ten neighborhoods in nine cities from a competitive pool of 21 applications. These sites represent the nation's largest metropolitan areas (population over one million) and are also home to the largest community foundations (annual grant making of \$2.5 million or more in 1992). The cities and target neighborhoods are:

- o Boston -- East Boston
- o Cleveland -- Westside area
- o Indianapolis -- Far Eastside
- o Kansas City -- Blue Hills
- o Memphis -- Vollintine Evergreen
- o Milwaukee -- Northwest Side
- o Philadelphia -- Frankford
- o Saint Paul -- Westside and Hamline Midway
- o San Francisco -- Chinatown

Each neighborhood submitted a strategic preservation plan as part of its NPI grant application. NPI is investing in a broad range of community safety, economic opportunity, physical revitalization and youth development activities.

### Governance

The Trusts \$8.5 million grant for the NPI is administered by the University of New Haven, and the national project office is located in New Haven, Connecticut. The project's design and implementation are overseen by a 14-member National Advisory Board. The NPI is managed by a two-person staff.

NPI grants were awarded to community foundations, who in turn granted project funds to existing neighborhood-based "lead organizations." Neighborhood organizations were allowed and encouraged to join together in a collaborative, but collaborative governance is not required of NPI grantees. Collaboratives were not permitted to incorporate as new entities for purposes of applying for NPI funding.

### Focus, Philosophy and Actions

The Neighborhood Preservation Initiative focuses resources on working-class neighborhoods with clear potential for renewal and growth. It recognizes that working-class neighborhoods are fragile and under considerable pressure, and in many respects face the same issues as their more distressed urban neighbors: crime, drugs, eroding economies and deteriorating physical structures — only to a lesser degree. However, NPI seeks to build communities' assets rather than focusing solely on overcoming their liabilities, and to test whether working-class neighborhoods can avoid the deterioration of the inner city to become a force for growth and renewal both for themselves and for the city as a whole.

NPI views working-class neighborhoods as typically defined by three socio-economic characteristics: home ownership, employment, and median household income at or near city-wide averages. Because most major urban programs in the past targeted severely disadvantaged neighborhoods, these neighborhoods have been largely overlooked by both public and private policy makers and funders.

### Funding

The Neighborhood Preservation Initiative is a national/local philanthropic partnership between The Pew Charitable Trusts and community foundations. Each participating site has a three-year budget of approximately \$1 million. The Trusts grants range from \$625,000 to \$1,050,000 per site. Community foundations partially matched NPI funds a minimum of 1:2. All matching funds are private, although additional public investments are being leveraged in support of approved local preservation plans. The time frame for grants to neighborhoods is 1995-97.

National funding is also available for cross-site conferences and technical assistance to individual sites.

### Evaluation

The Nelson A. Rockefeller Institute of Government will conduct the evaluation of the NPI program in conjunction with its study of working and middle class urban minority neighborhoods in fifteen cities. The Institute, which is the public policy research arm of the State University of New York, was established in 1982. Richard P. Nathan, director of the Institute and provost of the Rockefeller College of Public Affairs and Policy at SUNY - Albany, will be principle investigator for the evaluation.

The NPI evaluation, which was launched in August 1995, will be a comprehensive assessment of what is accomplished in the NPI sites with funds provided by Pew, local community foundations, and from other sources. The report will describe what was done, by whom, for or to whom, and the discernible effects on neighborhood preservation. The evaluation will be a documentation study focusing on what happens in the NPI neighborhoods.

The evaluation of NPI will be closely coordinated with the Institute's parallel national study of working and middle class urban minority neighborhoods. The aim of the study is to create a new conventional wisdom about the social conditions and economic prospects of the nation's large metropolitan areas, with a special emphasis on the settlement patterns of members of minority groups. This research project is an effort to gain more knowledge about the size, character, types, and changing trends of minority working and middle class neighborhoods both in cities and suburbs, and to identify policy strategies that can stabilize and strengthen these often vulnerable neighborhoods.

There is a five-city overlap between the NPI and the Institute's cases for the national study -- Boston, Cleveland, Kansas City, Philadelphia and San Francisco. To the extent feasible, field researchers will compare the NPI sites and matched non-NPI sites and analyze the extent to which NPI sites have

articulated a more fully developed and comprehensive approach to neighborhood preservation than sites where there is no formal intervention.

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HN3549

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**APPLYING A THEORIES OF CHANGE  
APPROACH TO THE EVALUATION OF  
COMPREHENSIVE COMMUNITY INITIATIVES:**

**Progress, Prospects and Problems**

by

**James P. Connell**

**Anne C. Kubisch**

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**Draft: December 1995**  
**Comments would be welcomed**

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## PREFACE

Comprehensive Community Initiatives (CCIs) are neighborhood-based efforts that seek improved outcomes for individuals and families as well as improvements in neighborhood circumstances by working non-categorically across social, economic and physical sectors. They are premised on the principle that "community building" and/or "empowerment" are critical dimensions of the change process.

This paper was prepared under the aegis of the Roundtable on Comprehensive Community Initiatives for Children and Families of the Aspen Institute. The Roundtable is a forum in which 30 representatives of comprehensive community initiatives -- including foundation sponsors, directors, technical assistance providers, evaluators, and public sector officials -- meet to discuss the lessons that are being learned by CCIs across the country and to work on common problems that the initiatives are facing.

In April 1994, the Roundtable established a Steering Committee on Evaluation to resolve the mismatch between current evaluation practices and the need to learn from and assess CCIs. The products of the first phase of the Evaluation Committee's work were published in early 1995 in the volume, *New Approaches to Evaluating Community Initiatives: Concepts, Methods and Contexts*, edited by James P. Connell, Anne C. Kubisch, Lisbeth B. Schorr, and Carol H. Weiss. This paper attempts to distill the discussions that the Committee members have had since the papers in that volume were written and the learning that has come from our collective efforts.

In addition to the Evaluation Committee members, there are many people who shared their time and wisdom with us in order to make this paper possible. Janice Hirota, a consultant to the Roundtable, took the first step in testing out the concepts of a "theories of change" approach to CCI evaluation on the ground, and the following people endured long interviews and discussions with us: Otis Johnson, Don Mendonza, and Mary Willoughby at the Chatham-Savannah Youth Futures Authority; Eric Brettschneider and his colleagues at the Agenda for Children Tomorrow in New York City; Marvin Cohen and his colleagues at the Chicago Community Trust's Children, Youth and Families Initiative; Arthur Bolton, Rosalind Garner, James Johnson, Jan Reeves and their colleagues in Sacramento; and Ron Register, Sharon Milligan, Claudia Coulton and their colleagues in Cleveland. In addition, Margery Turner, Lisbeth Schorr, and Langley Keyes provided invaluable feedback on an earlier draft. We are grateful to them all.

James P. Connell is the co-founder and director of research at the Institute for Research and Reform in Education, and is a member of the Steering Committee on Evaluation. Anne C. Kubisch is the director of the Roundtable on Comprehensive Community Initiatives for Children and Families.

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## OVERVIEW

In *Evaluating Community Initiatives: Concepts, Methods and Contexts*, (Connell, Kubisch, Schorr and Weiss, 1995), the contributors detailed many of the challenges posed by comprehensive community initiatives (CCIs) to the evaluation field -- challenges that are not met by existing evaluation approaches. For example, in one of the papers (Hollister and Hill, 1995), two advocates of using random assignment to estimate the impacts of social programs conclude that this preferred method of attributing impact to interventions is not feasible in CCI evaluation. They also argue that none of the currently available alternatives to random assignment -- the most prevalent of these being constructed comparison groups -- represents a reasonable "second best" approach. In another paper, O'Connor concludes that, if evaluations of CCIs are to illuminate the causal factors contributing to successful (or unsuccessful) efforts, the effects of the local and national political context on the design and efficacy of community initiatives must be a planned focus of the evaluation.

What is to be done? Two options that have, unfortunately, been pursued by CCIs have been (a) to retreat to process documentation of the initiative and give up on obtaining credible evidence of their impacts, and (b) to try to "force fit" the initiatives themselves into the procrustean bed of existing and accepted evaluation methods in order to be able to estimate their impacts. The Roundtable's Evaluation Steering Committee has rejected both of these alternatives. The group is exploring alternative approaches to evaluating CCIs -- approaches that will meet both the need for estimates of these initiatives' effects on interim and longer-term outcomes and the need for information on the critical elements of the interventions that produced those outcomes. We are now in the early stages of developing one such alternative, and this paper is a progress report on our efforts.

In the first section of the paper, we provide an overview of what we are calling a "theories of change approach" to evaluating CCIs, its key elements and its relation to a similar approach to program evaluation currently being advocated by Chen and his colleagues (Chen, 1990; Chen and Rossi, 1992). We then describe each of the key elements of this approach and their implications for designers, implementers, and evaluators of CCIs. These descriptions are uneven in their detail. We know more about how to articulate a theory of change than how to analyze the data in ways that test a theory of change. We conclude with some reflections on the constraints and the promise of the approach, including the ways that it can reinforce the basic principles of a CCI and contribute to a knowledge base that could inform the design of future neighborhood-based interventions.

Throughout the paper, we weave in information about current and planned CCIs in order to ground the points that we are making. The examples are synthetic ones, drawn from and combined across CCIs whose stakeholders have been generous with

their time and wisdom and have allowed us “inside the ropes” to inquire about their theories of change and observe these theories in action. And, while we take responsibility for this progress report, we are drawing on the considerable insights provided by our colleagues on the Steering Committee on Evaluation.

## **Overview of the “Theories of Change” Approach to CCI Evaluation and Comparison with Related Approaches**

In her seminal paper introducing a “theory-guided” approach to the evaluation of CCIs, Weiss (1995) defines a theory of change quite simply and elegantly as a theory of “how and why an initiative works.” Previously, Chen (1990) in his work on “theory-driven” approaches to *program* evaluation defined a “program theory” as a set of interrelated assumptions, principles and/or propositions to explain or guide social actions.<sup>1</sup> Both authors make strong arguments that evaluations, whether of discrete programs or complex community initiatives, be guided by these theories. They posit that theory-guided or -driven evaluations will yield more useful information for CCI designers and implementers, as well as for the broader scientific and policy communities, than will those that are either strictly “method-driven” (Chen, 1990) or those that do not attempt to specify and test *how* the efforts achieve their intended (and unintended) effects (Weiss, 1995).

We agree with both of these authors and are now prepared to build on their works to provide a more detailed presentation and assessment of what we are calling a “theories of change” approach to evaluating CCIs: a systematic and cumulative study of the links between activities, outcomes and contexts of a CCI.

We have identified three key elements of a theories of change approach to evaluating CCIs: surfacing and articulating the theories of change; measuring the activities and their intended outcomes; and analyzing and interpreting the results of the evaluation. These elements resemble the stages that any evaluator goes through in designing and implementing an evaluation: What is the treatment or intervention? What are its intended and measurable outcomes? And, how are the data to be collected and analyzed such that the causal links between treatment(s) and outcomes are described in the most compelling way?

The theory-driven approach to *program* evaluation that Chen and his colleagues advocate share these elements as well. But the answers to these three questions when they are asked by an evaluator of a CCI are much more elusive than when they are asked by an evaluator of a discrete or even a multi-faceted program. These different answers reflect, in large part, the qualitative differences between programs and CCIs -- differences that are put into bold relief when one attempts to systematically study these initiatives in ways that will yield compelling evidence on whether and how they work. For example, as we describe the steps that are necessary to surface and articulate a CCI’s theory of change, the reader will see that at their most general level these

theories are quite similar to program theories described by Chen and his colleagues and others. But, these similarities -- and their implications for evaluating CCIs -- wither quickly when one realizes that, unlike most programs, CCIs have multiple theories of change, that the theories operate at multiple levels (community, organizational/institutional, social network, individual), that they are co-constructed in a collaborative process by many of the stakeholders in the initiative, and that they evolve over the course of the initiative. Each of these attributes of CCIs has most likely haunted program evaluators on occasion but these attributes are part and parcel of CCIs -- they are the rule not the exception.

These core differences between programs and CCIs reverberate through the other key elements of the evaluation process as well. For example, the measurement process is much more complex and demanding than in typical program evaluations. Even in the more complex program evaluations -- with programs having different combinations of elements, multiple mediators and moderators of treatment effects (such as client exposure to and experience of treatments), and multiple desired outcomes (client behavior in multiple domains) -- the measurement process tends to reside at one unit of observation, typically the individual, and to occur in a fixed order, with treatment assessed first, mediators next and outcomes last. Moreover, measurement in program evaluations tends to draw primarily on quantitative techniques such as: administrative records of treatment participation; client surveys to measure exposure and experience; and client surveys, observational measures or administrative records of discrete client outcomes.

The measurement demands placed on evaluators of CCIs by a theories of change approach are quite different. Measures of treatments and outcomes must be developed at multiple levels. Treatments in CCIs are sets of activities that occur in iterative sequences (the later activities in the initiative being shaped by the outcomes of earlier activities) not fixed and predetermined sequences as in most programs. Measurement techniques applied in CCIs will have to span quantitative and qualitative approaches in order to meet these additional demands but must do so without abandoning the goals of rigorously testing the causal links between initiative activities and their intended outcomes. It is precisely this cumulative evidence of causal linkages that a theories of change evaluation will use to assess a CCI's effectiveness.

Finally, these differences between evaluations of programs and of CCIs have direct implications for the different ways that the data collected in the evaluation process will have to be analyzed and interpreted. For example, a key principle involved in attributing impact to programs is that a counterfactual must be created -- what would have happened to these clients if no program had occurred? In CCIs, however, everyone in the community is expected to benefit from "the treatment," and community level measures are included as key outcomes. Therefore, according to some experts (Hollister and Hill, 1995), creating a meaningful counterfactual using traditional techniques of random assignment (of individuals or communities) is not possible and trying to construct compelling comparison communities is not advisable.

How then can data from CCI evaluations be collected, analyzed and interpreted in a convincing way? In subsequent sections we will report our progress on these issues in more detail.

The purpose of this section was to point out that the challenges posed by CCIs to their evaluators are of a different magnitude than those faced by program evaluators -- even program evaluators who are taking a theory-driven or theory-guided approach. We will now discuss the key elements of this approach as applied to CCIs with emphasis on the implications of these key elements for the design, implementation and evaluation of these initiatives.

## **SURFACING AND ARTICULATING THE THEORIES OF CHANGE: WHAT IS THE "IT" THAT IS BEING EVALUATED?**

### **Moving from Global to Specific Theories**

In their introduction to the volume on *New Approaches to Evaluating Community Initiatives: Concepts, Methods and Contexts* (1995), Kubisch, Weiss, Schorr and Connell conclude that CCIs are difficult to evaluate in part because their designs are underspecified at the outset of the initiative. This underspecification is attributed to the fact that CCIs are broad, multidimensional, and responsive to community circumstances and because they represent a relatively new phenomenon about which learning has yet to accumulate in a way that could inform design. As a consequence, one of the first things that evaluators are often asked to do in a CCI evaluation is to help specify the theory underlying the intervention and, thereby, "unpack" the intervention itself.

Chen (1990) reviews a number of alternative strategies for articulating what he calls program theory, one of which resonates with our own predilections and the CCI field's limited experience in this area. He describes a process in which stakeholders and evaluators "co-construct" the program theory so as to maximize its utility for all, as a management tool, as a guide to resource allocation, and as a way of communicating with the field as a whole. The challenge here is for the evaluator to move from Weiss' and Chen's more generic definitions of theories of change to a theory of change for a given CCI that can then drive or guide its evaluation. A first step toward creating these evaluable theories of change is to work with the stakeholders to surface the logic of the initiative by focusing on its *goals, principles and operational strategies*.

The *goals* of an initiative are its long-term intended effects. For example, the goal of many CCIs is to improve the well-being of children and families in the neighborhood. Its *principles* are the premises upon which its ability to meet the goals are based. One of the most important principles in CCIs is community building, which posits, for example, that improvements of residents' well-being can be achieved

through the empowerment and increased social capital of neighborhood residents and through improvement of the social services that are provided locally. Its *operational strategies* are its means for putting the principles into practice. In this case, the initiative's primary operational strategy for improving social services might be to replace categorical and centralized services with integrated neighborhood-based family resource centers.

Having laid out the global logic of the initiative, the next step for the evaluator is to work with stakeholders to map out the specific logic, i.e., how the early and intermediate outcomes can be expected to lead to the goals of the CCI. And then, the task is to specify how the activities that the initiative will embark on are expected to produce those outcomes. In essence, this is a process of converting the goals, principles, and operational strategies of a CCI into a set of hypotheses about relationships between the concrete activities that comprise the initiative and their intended effects over the entire course of the initiative. Finally, the internal and external conditions -- such as the political, macro economic or racial/cultural environment -- that can affect both the implementation of those activities and their ability to achieve the anticipated outcomes must be incorporated into the theories of change.

### **Sorting Out Multiple Theories of Change**

Once this specification process begins, a second design problem affecting the evaluation of CCIs will quickly become apparent: that the various stakeholders in the initiative can, and often do, hold different sets of goals, principles and operational strategies for the initiative. Indeed, one of the most important contributions of this approach is that it points out that multiple theories of change may be operating simultaneously within a single CCI and that various CCI stakeholders might be working under different and possibly even competing theories of change.

For example, Weiss (1995) pointed out some assumptions CCI architects and funders are including in their theories of change: that \$250,000-500,000 per year a significant enough amount of money of to cause change at the neighborhood level; that a neighborhood is an appropriate unit on which to target an initiative's efforts; and that agency collaboration is required at the neighborhood level. One could imagine the director of the lead agency that is chosen to implement the new foundation-funded CCI operating under quite different assumptions: that \$250,000-500,000 is not nearly enough to achieve the change that she believes is required and that the grant should be used to leverage additional funds; that the neighborhood is not capable of achieving the change on its own and that significant efforts must be made to involve the neighborhood in city-wide efforts; and that agency collaboration is nice but it takes a lot of time and preempts the agencies' time to deliver the specialized services that are so badly needed in the neighborhood.

In what ways are these assumptions -- and the theories of change in which they are embedded -- in harmony, and possibly reinforcing, and in what ways do they imply different activities, timelines and even different outcomes? It is possible for a CCI to be launched without the various theories being fully articulated and reconciled -- a scan of the field suggests that this is not at all uncommon. But CCIs that remain inclusive enough to accommodate these multiple theories cannot avoid integrating the theories at two points: at the point of allocating resources, and at the point of evaluation. It is, after all, in the decisions about which activities to invest in that priorities must be developed about which of the various "hypotheses" that link activities to outcomes are most promising. And, it is in the process of designing an evaluation that specific decisions must be taken regarding what is meant by key terms (such as "collaboration"), the type and degree of change that is sought and the measures that would indicate whether that change is occurring. In the example above, the difference between the funder's and the director's views of the importance of agency collaboration would emerge as the evaluation plan is specified. In the funder's eyes, credible evidence of collaboration might be joint staffing of a new family service program and pooled resources. The lead agency director, on the other hand, might view collaboration so differently that her marker of progress might simply be increased evidence of referrals among agencies.

Resolving the challenges that these multiple theories pose is a political as well as scientific process. As one expert in the field has noted, one of the great strengths of the CCI phenomenon may be that it can accommodate multiple theories of change and move forward without their reconciliation (Richman, personal communication). But, as suggested above, the ambiguity that permits various stakeholders to project their own goals, principles and strategies on to the initiative becomes problematic during evaluation. And, the political question that confronts the CCI manager becomes: When is the CCI robust enough to have the true diversity of its stakeholders' theories surfaced and integrated into its overall theory? Or, when can it no longer operate without doing so?

The requirement that theories be articulated does not preclude pluralism. There are cases where multiple strategies are being pursued in the service of a common goal, for example, building developmental supports for youth by establishing service-based referrals to church youth groups, community service programs for youth, and support networks for their grandparents. Or, there are cases where multiple goals are served by a single operational strategy. For example, putting resources into an existing "community kitchen" has the aim of improving the physical health of the population by providing nutritious meals that are not available elsewhere, providing jobs for otherwise unemployed residents, and building "individual responsibility" by insisting that those who receive free meals contribute time to the kitchen or other neighborhood service activity.

Thus, this first key element -- eliciting the CCI theories of change -- will surface the multiple theories and will also, in all likelihood, force them to be reconciled

in some way. Will these different theories of change be included as parallel, integrated or competing strands in the overall theory or will some be selected for inclusion in the implementation and evaluation of the initiative and others not? The task of addressing these issues will not fall solely, or even primarily, to the evaluator, but surfacing these issues might. And the planning of the evaluation may well serve as the context within which these issues are played out.

### **Informing and Enriching CCI Designs**

As the specificity of these theories increases and as their multiplicity is addressed, a third issue will arise: their plausibility. Like current scientific theories, CCI theories are still waiting to be tested and the more they can be informed by relevant “data,” broadly defined, the more plausible they become.

Today’s CCIs are informed by a blend of information from various sources -- program experience, scientifically-generated knowledge, and community residents to name some of the most important. The theory construction process provides the opportunity for bringing those sources together in a manageable way and sorting out their implications for evaluation.<sup>2</sup> For example, suppose a CCI places high priority on reducing crime in the target neighborhood. If the information guiding the design of the crime reduction program were drawn primarily from the field of law enforcement, the program designer might develop a theory that focused on increasing police presence in the neighborhood. If the information were drawn from urban planning, the program theory might focus on the design of open spaces in the neighborhood or on use of abandoned housing in the neighborhood. If the information were drawn from the field of family therapy, the program theory might focus on targeting youth in households with a track record of child or spousal abuse. By making its theory of crime reduction explicit, this approach to evaluation enables the theory to be queried by all of these sources. Hopefully, the theory itself be strengthened and, by this process, the eventual design of the theory-guided evaluation will be more efficacious.

As Chen (1990) and O’Connor (1995) have suggested, CCIs’ theories of change must take into account contextual factors that are likely to affect the implementation of CCI activities, the outcomes of those activities and the links between activities and outcomes. Attention to context helps to ensure that the activities themselves are more intelligently implemented and that the evaluation yield sharper and more compelling tests of its hypotheses. For example, if a goal of the initiative is to create jobs within a particular neighborhood, activities focused on this goal should be attentive to whether the city has been designated an Empowerment Zone and whether the macroeconomic environment is expected to improve or decline significantly over the next few years. Setting up community-based family resource centers should be considered in light of state initiatives to co-locate services and devolve authority to neighborhoods. CCI plans to engage local citizens in developing community schools should be cognizant of federal timelines for phasing out court-ordered bussing. Careful consideration of context helps the initiative designer and evaluator to gain some clarity about factors that

may have a significant bearing on a CCI's chances for achieving its objectives but that the initiative itself is not initially able to influence.

## **DEFINING CCI OUTCOMES AND ACTIVITIES**

In order for the theories of change approach to drive the evaluation process, goals, principles and operational strategies must be translated into measurable elements -- outcomes and activities -- and specific hypotheses about change in these elements over time must be formulated. Whereas the contents and the sequence of the conversations among stakeholders regarding their theories of change cannot be fully delineated at this point, the required products of those conversations is relatively clear. They should result in: (a) an "outcome grid" for the overall initiative, first, and then more specific grid for each of its strands, such as the community empowerment and the services integration strands; and (b) sets of activities that are to be implemented within and across the strands that are expected to achieve initial outcomes and, where possible, intermediate and longer term outcomes as well. The outcomes and activities, once clarified and articulated, can then be woven together to produce the overall initiative theory of change.

### **Defining Initiative Outcomes**

Once the goals and principles of an initiative are stated, the theory of change can then be "unpacked" into more specific sets of early, intermediate and longer term outcomes. This unpacking process, similar to Weiss' (1995) "micro steps," should provide a more detailed picture of how the initiative's effects will unfold over time. For example, what should we expect to see happen as specific activities designed to empower residents and integrate services occur during the first year of the initiative? These are the early outcomes of the initiative, which like the intermediate and longer term outcomes will have to be assessed at multiple levels. For example, over the course of the initiative if it is "working," we should expect to see signs of residents' empowerment in the attitudes and behavior of individuals, in the ways families and other personal networks operate, in the behavior of institutions and organizations and in the way the community as a whole looks and behaves.<sup>3</sup> This notion of multiple levels of outcomes was introduced as a defining feature of CCIs in the introduction to the volume on CCI evaluation (Kubisch, Weiss, Schorr and Connell, 1995) but with primary reference to longer term outcomes of CCIs. Now we extend this notion across all stages of the initiatives and expect theories of change to include both the timing and levels of outcomes. For illustrative purposes, we present in Table 1 an "outcome grid" focusing on the social services "strand" of a hypothetical theory of change.

**Table 1: Outcome Grid for Hypothetical Theory of Change: Social Services Strand**

|                                      | <i>Initial</i>                                                                                        | <i>Early</i>                                                         | <i>Intermediate</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | <i>Longer-term</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>Community</i>                     | Three Potential Sites for Family Resource Center Found Viable by Initiative Collaborative             | Site Renovation Plan Approved by City Council and Building Authority | Collaborative and CBO Sponsor Resident Rehab of Family Resource Center Site and free bus service<br><br>Community Based Hiring Committee for Family Resource Center Reviews First Set of Applications and Hires Director and Four Staff for Three Year Contact | 70% of Families Citing Needs in Early Assessment are using the Center<br><br>Housing Turnover and Homelessness Decrease<br><br>Safe Areas Created by Resident Patrols in Two Blocks Surrounding Family Center<br><br>Emergency Room Use by Neighborhood Residents Declines |
| <i>Organizational/ Institutional</i> | Family Resource Center Plan Drafted by Agency Heads                                                   | Plan Approved by Agency Boards and Funds Allocated for Three Years   | Family Center Staff Receive Intensive Staff Training Involving Local Community Residents and Family Center Staff from National Sites of Service Reform                                                                                                         | Client Reported Practices by Family Resource Center Staff Match Needs Assessment<br><br>Second Family Resource Center Planned for Adjacent Community                                                                                                                       |
| <i>Family/ Personal Network</i>      | Family Needs Assessment Planned by Initiative Collaborative Completed by 65% of Neighborhood Families | Outreach Activities Contact 80% of Neighborhood Families             | Exit Interviews with First Family Clients Indicate:<br>a) Positive Responses to Family Center Staff and Services<br>b) Intent to "Spread the Word"                                                                                                             | Follow-up Needs Assessment Shows:<br>a) 90% Awareness and 65% Utilization of Family Center<br>b) Decrease in Severity of Family Crises<br>c) Increases in Family Efficacy in Coping with Crises                                                                            |
| <i>Individual</i>                    |                                                                                                       |                                                                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Level of Absenteeism Declines in Elementary School and Middle School Students Involved in Family Resource Center                                                                                                                                                           |

Some caveats about the outcome grid deserve discussion in order to appreciate the way that process is likely to unfold for CCIs.

- First, the grid will be uneven in its detail -- within an initiative's theory, early activities and outcomes and their timing will be more clearly specified than later ones.
- Second, evidence supporting the links between the theory's elements will also be uneven. For example, existing CCIs are now learning how long it takes to recruit new family center staff and to have the behavior of these staff change client perceptions. Until this learning is systematized and disseminated, new initiatives are "on their own" in creating timelines and expected levels of outcomes in these areas.
- Third, in many cases the outcome grid will be developed once the initiative is already underway. In our hypothetical example, there are no activities and outcomes having to do with the formation of the community collaborative or its fund raising activities but those activities are likely to consume a great deal of energy in the early stages of a CCI.
- Fourth, we expect the outcomes grid to evolve over the course of the initiative -- this grid serves as an initial map of mostly uncharted territory that the CCI itself will have to revise as it makes its voyage. Our experience thus far suggests that a fair answer to the question, "What levels of these outcomes can we expect to achieve in the fifth year of the initiative?" is "Ask us in the fourth year and we'll tell you."
- Fifth, the experience of evaluators dictates that we should expect the unexpected, that unintended outcomes for good and bad will occur. This approach through its probing and querying of assumptions hopes to surface all but the most unpredictable of these outcomes.

Despite these caveats, the grid is still essential for the evaluator to formalize the logic of the initiative, to sequence its intended outcomes, and to guide the selection of measurement points and assessment techniques. For the designers and implementers of the initiative the grid does all of the above and, as Weiss (1995) has noted, allows these stakeholders to more usefully query the initiative's expectations, time frames, operational strategies and allocation of resources.

### **Translating Operational Strategies into a Series of Activities**

Once an "outcome grid" such as that presented in Table 1 is articulated, the operational strategies for achieving these outcomes must also be "unpacked" into specific activities, planned occurrences and events, each of which is logically tied to the outcomes that the initiative is committed to achieving. How will the community collaborative identify and assess the viability of potential sites for the family resource center? What must happen to move from the approval of potential sites to the rehabilitation of the selected site to the opening of the center and then to strategies for getting residents to the center? One could imagine a wide range of activities that could produce these outcomes.

Perhaps the greatest unknown factor for determining the feasibility of the theories of change approach is the capacity of the CCI's stakeholders and evaluators to identify and then measure the key activities and the contextual factors affecting the implementation and efficacy of these activities *not in retrospect but in advance*. Evaluators and stakeholders alike are expert in looking back on programs and more complex interventions and constructing compelling tales of why a particular result did or did not occur. The challenge posed by the theories of change approach is to theorize prospectively about these issues: what will have to happen in order to get three candidate sites for the family resource center and when should we expect these things to happen?

Not surprisingly, there are plenty of caveats surrounding the process of translating CCI goals, principles and operational strategies into a series of activities that can then be tracked and measured.

- First, just as the outcomes grid is expected to evolve over the course of the initiative so too will the principles and operational strategies of the initiative and, therefore, the specific activities that flow from them. We have evidence from existing CCIs confirming these expectations. The theories of change approach only requires that these changes in the theory be made explicit and duly noted and that the resulting activities should be linked to the achievement of future intended outcomes.
- Second, in many cases, we expect "the best of the stakeholders' ability" to articulate the initiative's theory of change to be: "I don't know how we're going to get the money to make transportation to the family resource center available to all community residents...we'll just have to cross that bridge when we come to it." This does not mean the outcome should be removed from the theory of change; on the contrary, it should remain as a reminder of future work that needs to be done on the theory. If, on the other hand, no activities are forthcoming for bringing service agencies together to create a plan for the family resource center (an early intended outcome of the initiative), the plausibility of the theory and presumably the initiative's claim on resources for its implementation will be seriously at risk.
- Third, unexpected events, like unintended outcomes, are part and parcel of these initiatives -- a new mayor, the departure of a local employer, or a windfall from a philanthropist -- and any good CCI director needs to be opportunistic. Again, this approach must be ready for these events and try to capture them. But it must be done within the evolving theory of change and therefore must probe these possibilities as part of the initial and ongoing inquiry into the logic and context of the initiative.
- Fourth, Schon and Argyris (1992) have demonstrated that there is often incongruence between the theories and activities that are "espoused" and those that are delivered. Tracking and reporting the rhetoric versus reality gap is an important but potentially difficult aspect of this approach.

Being as clear as possible about its theory of change will be a major accomplishment for any CCI, especially given the many other demands placed on its stakeholders as the initiative is getting underway. Experience to date has shown that stakeholders assess its benefits as worth the effort. The challenge is then to move on to the next set of tasks: selecting the sets of outcomes and activities to be included in the evaluation process.

### **Deciding What is to Be Evaluated and When**

As pointed out by Weiss (1995) and Kubisch, et al. (1995), implementing a theories of change approach to evaluating CCIs will require considerable investment of resources in the measurement of ongoing activities and their intended effects. In order to make the best use of that investment and to enhance the likelihood that it will pay off in a given evaluation, priorities must be set as to which aspects of the initiative's theories of change should be the focus of attention.

Evaluators are always faced with decisions about what to evaluate. Typically, these decisions have to do with which long-term outcomes should/could be measured and how elaborate should/could the experimental or quasi-experimental designs be to increase confidence in attribution of change in these outcomes to the program. In more multi-faceted evaluations, implementation and process studies are also conducted and decisions about which features of the program to focus on and measure also must be made. The nature of CCIs and the demands of a theories of change approach to their evaluation forces similar decisions on its stakeholders and evaluators, but these decisions and the process for making them are likely to be more participatory and more substantively challenging. In short, they'll take more time and hard work.

For example, we already know that when the question of "what to evaluate" is called, differences between the needs of the funders of multi-site initiatives and the local planners of the CCIs diverge, specifically in the importance attributed to information about how the theories are working across sites versus information on the efficacy of local strategies with respect to locally defined outcomes. We also know that just as CCIs differ in their emphases and priorities, stakeholders within a particular initiative are likely to be differentially vested (economically and ideologically) in different strands of these initiatives. Such differences can play out in the evaluation process in subtle but important ways. For example, two constituencies might actively compete to be included in evaluation efforts because of the higher profile, additional information and potential resources associated with the process. Conversely, constituencies might compete for "hiding places" to avoid being included fearing increased accountability and external pressure

There are several criteria that could guide decisions about what to evaluate and when. As the field gains more experience (and learns more hard lessons), our understanding of these criteria will surely grow and deepen. For the present, we

suggest that the evaluator search for “natural break points” or ways of segmenting a CCI’s theory of change that have practical implications for its evaluation and that make sense to its stakeholders. We present some likely break points below. In so doing, however, we are not suggesting that one strategy for deciding what to evaluate should be selected to the exclusion of the others, only that this is a useful way of organizing information and developing a set of priorities.

*Theories of early change versus theories of later change:* In our experience, the best articulated theories are those whose implementation is most imminent. Not surprisingly, the measurement points of those theories of **early** change are also easier to specify. Since theories of later change, whose implementation is farther down the road, can be expected to be modified as the initiative unfolds, selecting those measures at the outset will more difficult and riskier. However, if the evaluator expects to be able to test the theories of *change*, baseline assessment of outcomes will have to be taken before implementation of the initiative. This distinction implies stages of investment in evaluation as the initiative’s theory of change becomes better articulated.

*Particular goals and strands of CCI activity:* In CCIs, these “strands” could be separated by how much they are expected to: improve various outcomes for individuals, revitalize economic activity in the neighborhood, produce better housing stock, enhance community “quality of life” indicators such as safety, recreation and community cohesiveness. Or, the CCI might be parsed according to the level of change -- individual, institutional, neighborhood, or system. Selection of the strands or levels for focus could be based on political, scientific or economic grounds. Political reasons might include the preferences of residents, funders, or policy audiences for early results or the vested interest that each of those constituencies might have in one of the longer term CCI goals. Scientific reasons include the strength or weakness of the evidentiary base for the hypotheses included in the strand, and the reliability and validity of the measures of its elements. Economic reasons include the expense in implementing the particular strand of activities and/or in conducting an effective evaluation of these hypotheses.

*Particular target groups within CCIs:* Similar to the “goals” criterion, prioritizing activities and outcomes for evaluation that involve elderly, youth, single mothers or unemployed could be guided by political, economic or scientific information.

*Dimensions of the theory that capture synergistic effects:* All CCIs are predicated on the theory that some kind of synergy occurs when the many types, levels and contexts of change are considered together. It may be possible to identify and focus upon key points of interaction.

Regardless of the criteria that are ultimately used for prioritizing what is to be evaluated and when, it is clear that these decisions must be made and that a consensually validated subset of the activities and outcomes in the CCI's theory of change must be selected as the focus of evaluation activities over a given period of time. We have learned from recent CCI experience that the prioritization process is aided by stakeholders' participation, particularly if stakeholders commit to moving on with next task in implementing this approach: measuring the elements.

## **MEASURING THE ELEMENTS OF A THEORY OF CHANGE**

In any evaluation, the translation of stated outcomes, program characteristics and processes into observable measures is a critical period in the evaluation, the results of which affect the cost, utility and credibility of the evaluation in profound ways. A clear difference between a theories of change approach and traditional evaluation approaches -- whether documentation/process evaluations or experimental and quasi-experimental impact studies -- is in how these measurement activities play out. Specifically, the theories of change approach, with its focus on accumulating rigorous tests of links between an initiative's activities and their expected outcomes, demands the same rigor and creativity be brought to the measurement of the initiative's ongoing activities as to the measurement of its expected outcomes. Typically in documentation or process studies, the activities of CCIs and earlier complex interventions are well described but the early, intermediate or longer-term results of these activities are not. And while "impact studies" of CCIs do not yet exist, the vast majority of existing impact studies of social interventions have focused measurement activities on longer-term outcomes of interventions not on the paths through which these outcomes are achieved. By merging these measurement emphases, the theories of change approach takes on the burden and expense of both, reinforcing the need for a clear and well-articulated theory of change from which high priority activities, outcomes and contextual factors can be selected for measurement.

As with other evaluation approaches, how difficult it is to select and obtain measures varies depending on the outcome that is selected. Some CCI outcomes are relatively easy to measure but their "face validity" could be questioned by some stakeholders in CCIs. For example, the proportion of students completing high school is relatively easy to measure but some stakeholders may challenge this as an indicator of "progress" if they perceive standards being lowered to increase proportions of students achieving this outcome. Measures for some CCI outcomes are still in early stages of being operationalized and measured and are not yet consensually validated. Community attributes such as social capital, shared values, strong networks are examples as are institutional change indicators of service integration, responsiveness to community needs, and systems reform.

As complicated as the measurement issues are with respect to outcomes of CCIs, measurement of their activities is even more complex. Implementing CCIs is so difficult that many of the current CCI evaluations focus a great deal of energy on

tracking, analyzing and drawing conclusions about the "processes" involved in the CCI's implementation. Generally, this emphasis has been well-received by both the funders and the directors of initiatives since formative feedback on operational issues is of direct assistance to them in making management decisions. In addition, documenting the process gives all stakeholders evidence that something is happening in the initiative -- and, therefore, perhaps some political cover -- in the near term while waiting for longer term outcomes to change. But, those who have been involved with CCIs for some time are well aware that an important challenge for evaluators is to not become so enmeshed in process that they lose sight of the brass ring. "Process creep" as it has been termed by David Osborne, can lead to a confusion between means and ends and information about process can begin to substitute for information about effectiveness.

When the overall evaluation is guided by well developed theory, those implementation studies can become much more powerful. The first and most important way is through a recasting of the "process versus outcome distinction." Specifically, in this approach, process is recast into specific activities that occur over the course of the initiative, and outcomes are expanded to include the intended effects of these activities that also occur over the entire course of the initiative (not just long term) and at multiple levels (not just individual level outcomes). Some of those activities might relate more to the creation of the conditions or capacities for achieving outcomes, and their outcomes might be indicators of "readiness" or precursors of the longer term outcomes. See, for example, the outcomes included in the sample outcome grid above.

In this approach, implementation of activities is viewed as a necessary but not sufficient condition for effectiveness even in the short term -- thus creating some pressure on these early successes and those responsible for their success. However, if these early activities are achieved, the CCI's credibility with stakeholders should be enhanced, especially if they were agreed upon in advance. If these outcomes are not achieved, it only makes sense to assess why they weren't and then do something about it.

The timeline for the measurement activities will not conform to traditional single-point or fixed-interval longitudinal assessments. Staggered baselines will probably be necessary to assess change in the outcomes, given that there are multiple hypotheses to be tested, that outcomes will occur at different time points in the life of the initiative, and that there are different units of observation each with different change properties. Fortunately, the theory of change provides some rational structure for determining these measurement points. Instead of setting arbitrary and perhaps unnecessary or inappropriate data-collection points, or expecting "constant" data gathering from the evaluator, this approach demands that measurement points be based on when activities specified in the theory of change occur and when their intended outcomes occur. For the purposes of feedback to the multiple audiences of CCI evaluations, this measurement strategy yields opportunities to take the temperature of

the initiative along the way and have those assessments be linked to the completion of important activities.

From this stage of a theories of change approach should come: clear definitions and measures of each of the activities and outcomes included in the high priority areas of the CCI's theories of change; and performance standards against which to assess the *quality* of CCI implementation and the *levels* of their intended outcomes. This measurement strategy allows and demands that measures be customized to the initiative's goals and its strategies for getting there. More intensive and evaluation-focused measurement work is a pre-condition for the promise of this approach to be realized. But if a strong collaborative process is established in the preceding stages of a theories of change evaluation, it could help assure that the stakeholders will work with the evaluator to explore creative measurement strategies that fit both practical and scientific criteria.

## **MAKING THE CASE FOR IMPACT: ASSESSING THE VALIDITY OF THE THEORY OF CHANGE**

No other issue remains as inchoate and as pervasive in our discussions of this new approach to evaluating CCIs as how to make the case that the CCI has or hasn't worked. The paper thus far will hopefully have most readers convinced that the benefits that accrue to the design and implementation of CCIs through this approach justify using it. Where we are on much shakier ground is whether such an approach to evaluation can provide "compelling" information as to the impact of a CCI -- its effect on one or more sets of outcomes over and above what would have happened to these outcomes in the absence of the CCI. For many of us, reading an evaluation report without hearing about the efficacy of the intervention is like reading a sports page without getting the game scores. The old adage "it's not whether you win or lose but how you play the game" is about as compelling in the policy and evaluation field as it is in sports -- and the reader can be the judge of that.

There are however choices as to how proponents of this approach can address this issue. First, we could say that a theories of change approach simply will not yield information on impact, that it helps evaluators more fully document and track change in activities and outcomes but does not yield information about whether changes in either the outcomes or the activities are attributable to the CCI. Second, we could try to place information from these evaluations on a "plausibility continuum." The anchor points on this continuum would be the current standards that have been established by the evaluation industry. We could then ask, "How plausible on this continuum is it that the activities that comprise the CCI and their outcomes are causally related?" Or third, we could look to establish a different plausibility continuum based on standards that are used in other scientific and practical fields.

Chen and Rossi (1992) and their colleagues have worked the most on this question as it relates to the theories of change approach and they have opted for the second choice. They use the evaluation field's standards to establish a continuum anchored at the "strong end" by evaluations that feature randomized experimental designs and at the weak end by designs, for example, that measure a single outcome at a single point in time after "treatment." Then they pursue strategies for moving the information that will come from these theory-driven evaluations toward the stronger end of the continuum. For example, Chen (1990) and others in their work with a theory-driven approach to program evaluation, present examples of how experimental and quasi-experimental design and their associated data-analytic techniques can be used and are being used in theory driven *program* evaluation to strengthen the causal inference of program impact, that is, to move the evaluation's conclusions "up" the plausibility continuum. Others (e.g., Trochim and Cook, 1992; and Yin, 1992) are moving toward alternative strategies for defining counterfactuals and creating competing hypotheses to pit against the favored one.

We see all of these "Option 2" strategies as useful and worthy of pursuing. But, we suggest that evaluators and methodologists pursue "Option 3" as well, that is, to try to redefine the plausibility continuum in ways that better fit the phenomenon we are studying using insights from other fields more accustomed to dealing with phenomena that share characteristics with CCIs. The need to draw inferences from data about the validity of causal hypotheses is generic to many fields of endeavor, including the physical, biological, social and political sciences, history, management, engineering and even everyday life. Our call for fresh thinking on the "impact issue" is motivated by the apparent lack of fit between the needs of CCI evaluators and the epistemological framework that currently dominates evaluations of social programs -- a framework that seeks to make the primary mode of inquiry look as much like a "true experiment" as possible. The emergence of this "experimental" framework brought much-needed rigor to earlier evaluation strategies but does not seem to hold much promise as a guiding framework for testing the validity of these complex theories of change guiding CCIs. Lest we regress to earlier eras of totally subjective and easily dismissed or manipulated evaluation approaches, this theories of change approach must pursue additional ways to have its information about "impact" be as rigorous and compelling as possible, and then re-educate the audiences for these evaluations about the new "gold standard" for such inferences.

At the same time, in looking to other academic and applied disciplines for insight on these issues, we should not abandon our current evaluation methods. All of them will be needed as we attempt to implement this approach and particularly as we attempt to clarify the kinds of causal inferences that can be made when using this kind of approach. Experimental techniques, group comparison strategies, and time series analyses, along with qualitative approaches to measurement and analysis/interpretation, could all be called upon in a theories of change evaluation. We see the primary challenge posed by the theories of change approach as how to combine results from a

multitude of data-gathering and design strategies into a compelling and informative description of a CCI's accomplishments and missteps. At the most general level, the theories of change approach contends that the more the events predicted by theory actually occur over the course of the CCI, the more confidence evaluators and others will have in the theory and its constituent hypotheses. And, the more detail and context that accompany the links between activities and outcomes in the theory of change (the theory's micro steps as Weiss has called them) the more compelling the tests of these hypotheses become as evidence of the initiative's impact.

Regardless of how these long-standing evaluation issues are faced by the theories of change approach, the evaluators of CCIs will face another dilemma shared by other evaluators. Is the theory of change used to evaluate the initiative? Or, is the initiative used to test the theory of change? (Granger, Personal communication, 1995). This conundrum is best understood by examining the dilemma facing those wishing to explain why an outcome predicted by the CCI theory does *not* occur. Is it because the activities that comprise the initiative were not properly implemented? Or, is it because of some flaw in the particular propositions regarding activities and their intended outcomes? Or, is it a flaw in propositions regarding linkage between early, intermediate and longer term outcomes? Or, could it be all of the above? The only way to disentangle these interpretations is to have their tests be sequential and separate. (See end note.)<sup>4</sup>

Two other caveats are important to note. First, as many other evaluators have observed, there are many ways to strengthen causal inferences. To the extent that the activities of the CCI are very well designed and executed, the intended outcomes well-matched to these activities and the measures of the outcomes precise and sensitive, the magnitude of change in the outcomes may be sufficient to convince the most skeptical audience that it was "caused" by the CCI activity (Gueron, Personal communication, 1995). Second, the expectation of strictly linear effects in these initiative is not necessarily reasonable. For example curvilinear models of change in group dynamics - from forming to storming to norming to performing -- may be necessary to capture an initiative's efforts to build collaborative groups among diverse participants.

## RELATED PROBLEMS AND STRENGTHS

### Practical Constraints

It pays to think about what you're trying to accomplish and how you're going to do it before you actually do it. Gather information about how your plan is panning out and then adjust the plan based on what you learn. Neither of these insights is startling or unique. In fact, both of these insights are quite common-sensical. Similar ideas are captured by the terms "reflective practice," as it is used in the education and social services literatures, and "data-based management" and "strategic planning" as discussed in the organizational literatures. The major claim that a "theories of change approach" has as a viable way of evaluating CCIs is its inherent common sense and the limits of currently available approaches for doing the job. In this paper we have presented a progress report on this new approach.

The next and most important phase is how this approach holds up in the "crucible of practice." Before closing, therefore, we feel obligated to be clear about what we foresee as some of its practical constraints. In order for a theories of change approach to evaluating CCIs to be most useful, significant investments of time and resources will be required by evaluators and by all the major actors in the initiative. Some of these include:

- considerable skills and up-front investment in getting the theories articulated, consolidated and transformed into evaluation designs;
- frequent on-site presence of the evaluators (and their community partners) to: observe whether and how "well" the activities that comprise the initiative are being implemented; detect and react to differences between espoused theories and the activities actually implemented; and measure the expected and actual outcomes and track the expected and actual timelines;
- considerable interview time of major stakeholders;
- potentially burdensome data collection;
- sophisticated measurement development;
- sorting out of multiple roles for the evaluators; and
- strategic efforts to convince skeptics of the significance of the results given the absence of an experiment.

Of course, many of these investments would be required for any good evaluation. What is not yet known is whether a theories of change approach suggests still greater investments on these fronts or whether it suggests efficiencies to be realized through the guidance of the evaluation activities by a well-articulated theory that, along with its data-collection activities, is consensually validated by the CCI's stakeholders.

## **Other Strengths of the Theories of Change Approach**

An important contribution of a theory-based approach is in the analysis and interpretation of the evaluation information. Its attention both to activities and outcomes, and most notably its effort to link the two, means that theory-based evaluation has the potential to guide those who wish to apply the lessons in other settings, whether at the broad policy level or at the program level. It also points out gaps in knowledge and helps to lay out a research agenda for many fields of inquiry. In this way, this approach has advantages over most other methods. For example, many evaluations based on classical control and treatment groups place little or no emphasis on explaining why an experiment worked or did not work and therefore yield no lessons on this issue. At the other end of the spectrum, highly detailed qualitative studies limit our ability to pull out the generalizable lessons that might emerge from an intervention. But the clarity of causal inference that accompanies the former method and the richness of description that accompanies the latter should both be marshaled in evaluations based on a theories of change approach.

Also, activities that lead to the articulation of the CCI's theories of change may in themselves reinforce the broader goals of the initiative. In particular, they can be a powerful tool for promoting collaboration and engagement at the community level. For example, building capacity for ongoing problem-solving at the community level is an explicit goal of virtually all CCIs and, because the theories explicitly value community knowledge, vehicles for resident involvement are more easily built into the structure of CCIs. Brown (1995) suggests that an evaluation, if so designed, can contribute to that goal by ensuring that data about the community are collected, analyzed and then fed back in a way that can educate and mobilize residents to participate in an ongoing community planning process. Although this notion is attractive in principle, it can be difficult to get agency staff or residents to invest the requisite time and energy into the evaluation enterprise since it is so often seems secondary to activities that lead more directly to improved outcomes. We suggest that a theories of change approach to evaluation, when developed with or shared with staff and residents, could help to overcome that reluctance. It helps to make explicit the capacity-building agenda of the initiative and the role that evaluation can play in that agenda.

At the same time, the theories of change approach creates two other opportunities. It helps to clarify the accountability pathways within an initiative. Creating new partnerships, fostering collaboration, developing community capacity, and so on, can lead to a diffusion of responsibility that is detrimental to the impact and the sustainability of an initiative. The more explicit the theory of change, the more explicit and consensually validated is the accountability structure.

Second, the approach shows that formative and summative evaluation can be thought of as complementary, and it diminishes the perceived trade-off between rigor and programmatic utility of information being collected. The theories of change

approach aspires to both of these goals but does not separate them. It also adds social learning as a third goal. The approach as we see it recognizes that there is neither the need nor the time to collect separate kinds or different qualities of information in order for these three goals to be served. From our perspective, it is equally important to gather rigorous and useful information to guide the design and implementation of an ongoing CCI as it is to assess its effectiveness and test hypotheses about why and how it is working.

The co-constructive process that is so integral a part both of CCIs themselves and of this new approach to their evaluation is the foundation for our optimistic views. The validity of these views will of course be tested as the approach is implemented and its outcomes measured and interpreted. We look forward to this challenge and to the Roundtable's potential contribution to meeting it.

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## ENDNOTES

1. Where we differ from Chen's suggestion is in his separation of these program theories into two separate types. Chen draws a primary distinction between normative

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theory driven evaluations and causative theory driven evaluations. According to Chen (1990), normative evaluations are based on the intents and expectations of stakeholders in the program, and are expected to come from intuition and experience. The results of these types of evaluations can inform the implementation, management and future design of programs. Causative evaluations are based on social science research and other empirical bases. The results of these causative theory driven evaluations can be used to extract information about the impact of the program's elements on intended and unintended outcomes, the causal mechanisms through which the impact occurred and the generalizability of the evaluation's results.

We find it necessary to question Chen's primary distinction between normative and causative evaluations for a number of reasons. First, the two different knowledge bases (program experience and scientific) that Chen argues can and should generate distinct program theories are too thin and too mutually informative with respect to CCIs to segregate them. Social science research and evaluation research are just beginning to investigate communities in ways that can provide evidence on what factors bring about change in contemporary communities (Sullivan, forthcoming) and on how community change impinges on the lives of their residents (Connell, Aber and Walker, 1995; Brooks-Gunn, Aber and Berlin, forthcoming). In our view, this emerging knowledge base must be combined with the insights and experience of past CCIs (e.g., O'Connor 1995; Halpern 1995) and with the growing but still early and idiosyncratic insights and experience of contemporary community initiatives' stakeholders. Results from evaluations that test theories of change generated from this *combined* knowledge base should then be expected to inform current stakeholders' change efforts *and* generate new scientific knowledge to enrich the design of future CCIs.

Chen then goes on to draw further distinctions within normative and causative theories among different *types* of evaluations. Simply stated, these types clarify whether the evaluator focuses more on the *means* or on the *ends* of the program. Chen also discusses hybrid models of evaluation based on combining these different types of evaluation strategies.

The differences between program evaluation and evaluation of CCIs also brings these distinctions into question. First, Chen's different types of evaluations -- ones focusing quality and moderators of program implementation, mediating processes linking treatment to outcomes or outcomes per se -- only make sense at the most general levels of theories of change for CCIs, not at the more specific levels of theories where the evaluations will be designed and implemented. The dynamic, multidimensional, multi-level and iterative nature of the "treatment" involved in CCIs requires that the evaluation be viewed as a repeating but iterative cycling of activities and outcomes that themselves are interactive. Unlike many of Chen's examples, with CCIs no one set of activities can claim to be "the program" or "the treatment" and no one interim outcome can claim to be *the* mechanism linking these activities to the

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longer-term outcome. As enriching as Chen's analysis is to the field of *program* evaluation, it still falls short of capturing the biggest challenge CCIs pose to their evaluators: to illuminate whether and how ongoing and evolving activities involving different and shifting populations of individuals are affecting outcomes at multiple levels of analysis.

<sup>2</sup> Of course, the field aspires toward future CCIs being guided by theories that are firmly grounded in scientific and field-tested research. At this point, however, neither scientific research nor field experience can offer dispositive evidence for particular CCI strategies being effective. Therefore, CCIs' theories of change must be open to multiple sources of inputs. These inputs, however, need to be translated into scientifically testable hypotheses, the tests of which will contribute to the knowledge base and guide future design decisions.

<sup>3</sup> Some refer to these early outcomes as "outputs" that are more proximally linked to program action. For example, suppose a housing agency has established long-term home ownership goal as its ultimate outcome and is tracking home ownership rates. The "output" measure, and the one that it can hold local managers accountable for, is the number of first-time home buyers who receive FHA insurance since (a) managers have direct control over this measure of performance and (b) there is a clear conceptual connection between serving first time home buyers and increasing the home ownership rate (Turner, personal communication).

<sup>4</sup> For example, say one strand of a CCI's theory of change states that co-locating all family services into a neighborhood center leads to higher levels of client satisfaction, use of services and client follow-through. The these interim outcomes lead to lower levels of reported cases of child abuse and neglect in that neighborhood. After three years, *no change* is detected in the levels of reported abuse and neglect. First question, are family services integrated to the levels specified that would lead to the three interim outcomes? If no, then implementation problems are the only viable interpretation and the other two hypotheses included in theory remain untested. If yes, did the interim outcomes move to the levels expected, i.e., to levels adequate to achieve the longer-term outcome? If no, then misspecified linkage between CCI activity and interim outcome is a viable explanation for the lack of change in the longer-term outcome. If yes, then misspecified linkage between change in interim and longer term outcomes is a viable explanation. Further analyses could be run if interim and longer term outcomes were measured at the individual level to find out whether inter-individual differences in interim outcomes are correlated with individual variation in longer term outcomes. If no, then the proposed linkage between interim and long-term outcome would be even more suspect. If a correlation was obtained, then we can assume that a third unmeasured variable accounts for correlation but was not sufficiently changed by the presence of integrated services to produce change in the longer term outcome.

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Even in this simplified example, the complexities of interpreting data generated by this approach are abundantly clear. However, these same complexities are faced by many scientific endeavors and by decision-makers in applied fields on a regular basis and their insights into how to disentangle should prove valuable.

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