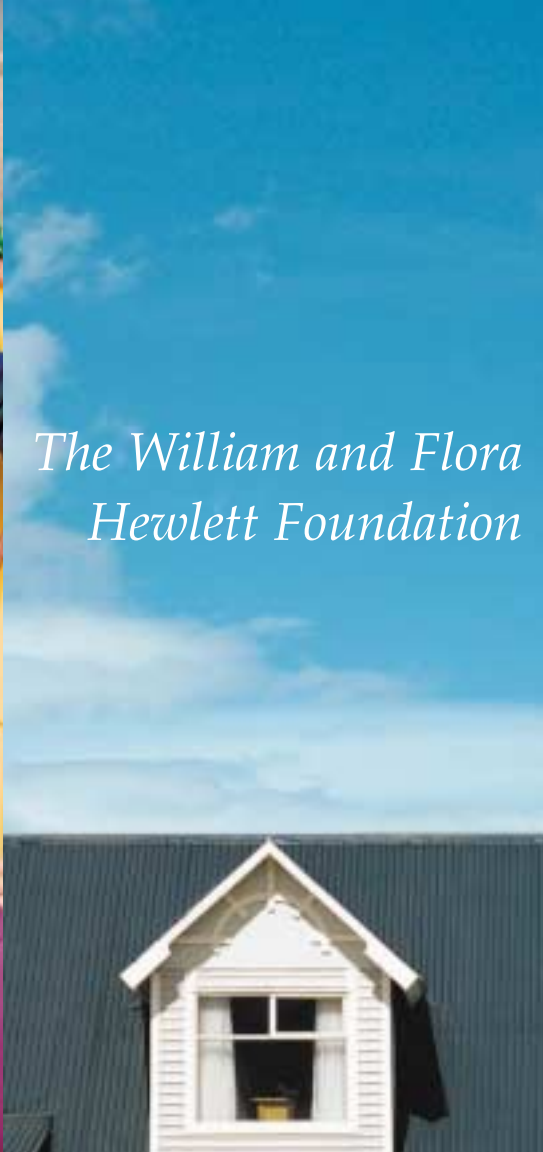




*The William and Flora
Hewlett Foundation*

**COMMUNITY
DEVELOPMENT**

A GUIDE FOR GRANTMAKERS ON
FOSTERING BETTER OUTCOMES
THROUGH GOOD PROCESS



Community Development

*A Guide for Grantmakers on
Fostering Better Outcomes
Through Good Process*

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This is a guide for funders on the valuable role of collaborative process in community development initiatives. It draws from the lessons learned by The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation during twenty years of funding conflict resolution, collaboration, and civic engagement. It also draws extensively on other organizations' experiences, the community development literature, evaluations of community development initiatives, and the authors' expertise.

In this guide you will find:

- A description of the elements of good collaborative community development process
- Examples of challenges to collaboration and of tools to help overcome those challenges
- Guidance for funders to inform their grantmaking
- Lists of additional resources useful for further study

The lessons learned about collaborative process and community development reflect the diversity of the practitioners who provide process advice to community development initiatives. Whether practitioners identify themselves as collaboration specialists, facilitators, or mediators, as proponents of “deliberative democracy” and collaborative governance, or as community organizers or community development specialists, they tend to agree on common elements of process that conduce to tangible community development outcomes. We hope that by clarifying those elements, this guide will help our colleagues in the community development grantmaking community as well as the grantees and the communities they support.

— *Paul Brest, President*
The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation

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Collaboration and community organizing are both important elements of “good process” in community development.

Good Process and Community Development

As anyone who has observed a successful community development initiative knows, it is not a solo act. In fact, effective community development is a process, a participatory endeavor. The work may be driven by residents, or steered by an investment and housing development partnership, or made up of complex partnerships anchored by a community development corporation (CDC) or community collaborative. It may be seen as top-down or bottom-up. It may be seen as representing all of the community, or not. It may be attending to deeper issues of race, class, and culture, or not. And perhaps most important to those who fund these initiatives, the efforts may be seen as successful, or not.

The phrase *community development*, as funders know, can encompass a broad range of activities. In this guide, community development is “asset building that improves the quality of life among residents of low- to moderate-income communities, where communities are defined as neighborhoods or multi-neighborhood areas.”¹ It embraces a wide variety of place-based work, including neighborhood revitalization, support for community development corporations, sustainable development, workforce development, comprehensive community initiatives, the linking of neighborhoods and regions, and family strengthening initiatives, as well as efforts to build and strengthen community development infrastructure.



INTRODUCTION

TYPICAL FUNDING OBJECTIVES

- *Neighborhood revitalization initiatives*
- *Supporting and expanding the work of community development corporations*
- *Supporting citywide community development infrastructure*
- *Community organizing to support community development*
- *Linking community development initiatives (here, physically-oriented development) with other community strengthening strategies*

While there are many factors that contribute to the success of community development initiatives, poor process can lead to only partial success or even outright failure. Community development initiatives face tough times when there are too many meetings without sufficient progress, or too few to generate enough support; or when there are too many community meetings without a clear focus, or there aren't enough, or they're poorly attended. Initiative leaders can become particularly frustrated when all the "right" people are in the room, but the participants are unable to find agreement.

Although good process is important, it is also important to recognize that it has its limitations. We recognize that power—and its abuse—can upend the best collaborative process. Those who followed the federal Empowerment Zone initiative saw agreements built by inclusive and collaborative planning processes thwarted in some cities when politicians led bald takeovers once the designation was received and the funds started to flow.²

There can also be too much process. Many communities have been "processed to death" or "meetinged out." Leaders are just as wary of another unproductive meeting as they are of being left out of a major decision. Attending to every process goal and every relationship can turn meetings into marathons without any action. Indeed, the community development evaluation literature suggests that being strategic and knowing when to use a more intensive process is one of the hallmarks of successful community development initiatives.

Collaboration and Community Organizing Are Both Important

Good process is often defined in the negative—it’s easier to talk about what is missing than what should be there. Underlying racial tension, missing stakeholders, and lack of buy-in are easy to spot. But helping a process get back on track often requires more than just addressing the immediate problem. Indeed, good process is more than a particular approach, such as consensus building or community organizing. Rather, it emerges from a rich interaction among complementary approaches—approaches that actively and meaningfully engage the community and foster mutually supportive partnerships while focusing on a whole-community perspective.

Imagine for a moment a typical organizational collaborative—perhaps a CDC, several community-based organizations (CBOs), the local housing finance agency, a national intermediary, and several neighborhood organizations. One can envision how this set of partners could “exchange information, alter activities, share resources, and enhance each other’s capacity for mutual benefit and a common purpose by sharing risks, responsibilities, and rewards.”³ But what happens if, while these partners engage in their interorganizational collaboration, for-profit developers, once the neighborhood is stabilized, gain control of prime multifamily housing sites, effectively pushing many low-income residents out of the neighborhood? Eventually, residents themselves may begin to battle over the direction for the neighborhood, some advocating for gentrification and others for protecting existing residents.

At the same time, other players enter the picture: the family strengthening collaborative, the community policing effort, and the school violence prevention effort. These initiatives, while all doing good work, engage the same leaders from the CBOs and

TYPICAL FUNDING OBJECTIVES (cont.)

- *Community development efforts linked to outcome goals such as sustainable development, “green” development, smart growth, historic preservation, etc.*
- *Initiatives designed to shape the future of the community development industry within particular places*
- *Comprehensive community initiatives*
- *A wide array of initiatives designed to build the leadership, organizational, and community capacity*
- *Influencing local community development policy regarding funding levels and strategy*

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neighborhood organizations as the community development effort, stretching the capacity of these volunteers and small-staff organizations to the breaking point.

And finally, although this community development collaborative may reach its housing unit production goals, larger goals for the neighborhood may be lost as the character of the neighborhood changes, long-standing local organizations become less effective due to the stresses on the leadership, and the sense of community is diminished due to conflict.

So, what are some approaches to solving these problems?

One approach comes from the community organizer, who might look at this emerging scenario and quickly discern that neighborhood residents lack the power and organization to block the for-profit developers. “Organizing,” according to Mike Miller from the Organize Training Center, “does two central things to seek to rectify the problem of power imbalance—it builds a permanent base of people power so that dominant financial and institutional power can be challenged and held accountable to values of greater social, environmental, and economic justice; and it transforms individuals and communities, making them mutually respectful co-creators of public life rather than passive objects of decisions made by others.”⁴

On the other hand, a facilitator or mediator might look at this scenario and see the conflicts among residents, nonprofits, and city government over the direction of the neighborhood and conclude that common ground can be found. She might suggest that “through a new approach to problem solving—called consensus building—groups can forge agreements that satisfy everyone’s primary interests and concerns. Using consensus-based approaches, groups can jointly develop solutions and make

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decisions that are more widely supported . . . [and] in the process, group participants gain a mutual respect for and an understanding of each other's viewpoints."⁵

Both community organization and collaboration are important in contributing to effective community development. Community organizing helps build power within community groups and enables them to take a spot at the table to help plan and initiate better community development initiatives. Some excellent sources of information about community organizing can be found in the *Community Organizing Toolbox: A Funder's Guide to Community Organizing* (www.nfg.org/cotb/index.htm) and *Community Organizing: A Populist Base for Social Equity and Smart Growth* (www.fundersnetwork.org/info-url_nocat2778/info-url_nocat_show.htm?doc_id=140996).

This guide will focus on collaboration—not as a separate process tool, but as an integrated part of community development. This “collaborative community development” is not about collaboration for collaboration's sake. It is about the kind of collaboration required to achieve desired, sustainable community development outcomes, the absence of which may result in delay, frustration, and, in some cases, permanent gridlock and failure.

“In the making of ham and eggs, both the chicken and the pig ‘participate.’ But it can hardly be said that both benefit from their participation.”

—Latin American proverb⁶

*A good process has many facets,
but ultimately a good process must
lead toward successful outcomes.*

“For me, housing 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.”

“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, why bother?”

Elements of Good Community Development Process

Imagine for a moment the executive director of a CDC, a community organizer, the city community development director, a neighborhood leader, a banker, and a foundation official having a drink and talking about local politics. The conversation turns to the neighborhood they all work in, and divisive statements like those in the sidebar begin to be made. The conversation grows more heated.

There is a moment when everyone agrees that some collaborative process is good, but then an argument begins. The neighborhood leader suggests the process really needs to address the history of racism and be community driven. The banker is advocating for a clear process with a small number of players that can work effectively and accountably with her funds. The community organizer wants a connection to the region, “where the jobs really are.”

Meanwhile, the funder, who desperately wants these players to get their act together to make something bigger happen in this neighborhood, struggles with the situation, wondering, “Just what is a good community development process?”

The discussion below, which seeks to articulate core elements of a good community

development process, will not quiet decades-long debates about effective community interventions, nor should it. In fact, understanding different perspectives, ideologies, and analysis—and working to create a planning, decisionmaking, and action process that reflects the differing needs and goals of each community—is a part of what is needed to make a community development process work. Ignoring a particular perspective is likely to mean that those who share that perspective do not participate, or participate with serious attitude. Attending to that challenge is the first core element.

The Politics of Good Process

A Good Process Is Intentional and Requires Advocacy

The word *process* is used in many different ways. In its most fundamental and narrow sense, process is an analytical construct developed to study and improve interactions between two or more people. Process practitioners of varying kinds—facilitators, mediators, therapists, counselors, consultants—use a wide variety of tools, strategies, and modalities to improve the process of interaction among people to achieve various goals.

So what makes a process a good one? Good process is intentional and strategic. It embraces a series of complementary strategies and tactics that not only build support for the effort, but also have a logic that is focused on achieving better outcomes.

On the other hand, poor process often follows old patterns. Many of these patterns have either intentionally or inadvertently led to the conditions of disinvestment, disenfranchisement, and oppression that brought about the need for community development. A better process is required to change those patterns—a process that will lead to more investment, connection, and authentic participation, especially among those who have had the least voice.

A good community development process requires advocacy, because it intentionally seeks to reform or upend existing processes in order to create a process that will lead to more investment, connection, and authentic participation, especially among those who have had the least voice.

Advocacy for good process, then, becomes important—particularly advocacy around broad issues such as who is engaged and what the rules of engagement are. Process advocacy raises design questions. Who should be at the table? How will we make sure key funders and local government will respect the wishes of the community? How will the voices that have not been heard—be they the voices of the disenfranchised or the voices of those with resources who have not invested in the community—be heard? How can we have meetings that are effective and candid and encourage deep dialogue and deliberation? Early process advocacy with clear process-design ideas can help create an initiative supported by a wide array of stakeholders.

Good community development process is not merely a single process, but an intentional strategy that encompasses the various participatory initiatives in a community and effectively coordinates, links, combines, and supports these efforts to ensure that, to the furthest extent possible, they are working in concert, using a shared strategy and supporting a common vision.

A Good Process Links Other Processes Together

Not only does every smart community leader or community organization use some sort of participatory process for planning and action, virtually every major funder—whether public or private—demands some sort of community process as a condition for receiving or guiding the use of the community development funds. This means that communities are frequently full of many—often perfunctory, occasionally authentic—participatory processes that can compete with each other for the attention and commitment of the same grassroots and grasstops leaders.

Although some of these processes naturally complement each other, many tread the same territory. For example, prevention programs—substance abuse prevention, truancy prevention, teenage pregnancy prevention, and gang prevention—often employ the same youth development strategies, but fail to integrate their efforts into a broader, potentially more effective agenda. Participatory processes can also serve each other: for example, a site-based effort such as a brownfields redevelopment or a Main Street revitalization can serve as the backbone for a broader neighborhood revitalization initiative.

Good community development process is not merely a single process, but an intentional strategy that encompasses the various participatory initiatives in a community and effectively coordinates, links, combines, and supports these efforts to ensure that, to the furthest extent possible, they are working in concert, using a shared strategy and supporting a common vision. Indeed, as the Local Initiatives Support Corporation noted in an examination of the future of the field, “At its best, community development is a non-linear enterprise: tackling two different but related problems can produce dramatically more results than a single-minded assault on just one target—[it can] produce a transforming reaction.”⁸ Good process is the linkage that creates the transforming reaction.

A Good Process Is Supported by Many

The first reaction to the phrase *good community development process* might be “according to who?” “Good,” after all, is in the eye of the beholder.

In order for a community development process to be seen as good—collaborative, community driven, inclusive, effective: the words that often substitute for “good”—it must be valued and supported by a wide range of participants, which means a good process responds to and reflects a widely divergent set of interests. If too many stakeholders or too many residents find the process flawed, wanting, or ineffective, one of two things occurs: either the process becomes highly contentious and conflictual as the participants polarize or game the process to attain their goals, or they simply walk away. Neither situation leads to successful community development outcomes.

A Good Process Is Not Imposed on People

People and organizations in the community development world, who are often fight-

A good community development process responds to and reflects a widely divergent set of interests.

A good process is not imposed on people—it requires their consent.

ing for control of their community, are rarely comfortable with anything being imposed on them, much less someone else's version of a good process. Having the initial partners "define the group, its purpose, and its goals as they saw fit" was one of the key steps taken by the Altman Foundation in establishing the groundwork for a successful initiative.⁹ This lesson holds true for anyone in power: governments, agencies, and even CDCs. Having partners define the process will not only build ownership, but also reflect a broader range of strategic insights.

One tool communities can use to assist in defining a process is a written "partnering agreement" (also called a "protocol" or a "charter"). In San Diego's Barrio Logan neighborhood, a place where neighbors have had many reasons to distrust government, a facilitator worked with the community to develop a two-page document that described agreed-upon project goals, described the role of project co-leaders and partners, and laid out a specific conflict resolution process to be followed when agreement could not be reached. All participants in the process signed the partnering agreement.¹⁰

Meaningfully Engaging Residents and Working with Underlying Issues

Two of the most significant aspirations for a community development process are also the most challenging to implement. The first is ensuring that residents play a defining role. Indeed, the phrase *community driven* is a maxim in community development. Used liberally in grant proposals and descriptive brochures, it appeals to underlying aspirations for empowerment, a more participatory democracy, and self-determination.

The desire to ensure that residents drive the agenda intersects with the second common

aspiration—to progressively address the issues of race, class, culture, and power in community development work. Indeed, a community-driven enterprise places residents—often of a different race, class, and culture than the usual decisionmakers—in an empowered role.

The Community Must Be a Meaningful Player

As one grantmaker expressed it, meaningfully engaging residents is “not just moral, not just right . . . it’s the only way [community development] works.”¹¹ A recent report from a Neighborhood Funders Group meeting echoed this claim:

Even though the terminology distinctions were important in understanding each initiative, participants agreed that the essence of resident engagement was the extent to which residents had power to influence decisions. Or, as one participant asked, “Is the community involved in the funder’s game or in their own game?” Participants in long-time initiatives with quantifiable achievements were quick to point out that, in the long run, it has to be the community’s game for any gains to be sustained.

The discussion continued:

Questions about who qualified as a “resident” were part of every initiative’s struggle at some point, since neighborhood businesses, organizations, and people who worked in the neighborhood were also part of the decision-making process. Participants agreed that business owners, service providers, churches, schools, and others have a stake in what happens, but it is not the same stake as the people who live there. One participant summed up the distinctions succinctly: “Residents reside; stakeholders participate. But residents

Good community development process persistently ensures that community residents are meaningfully engaged and have sufficient power to influence decisions in ad hoc processes and governance structures.

are the ones who have to live with the decisions.” Clarifying who plays what role in decisions—and at what point—was a key turning point toward success in every project. *The balancing act for funders is to be a strong partner, offering tools and resources that are necessary to move the work forward but fully respecting residents’ rights to question, disagree, or reshape ideas without jeopardizing the partnership.* (emphasis added)¹²

The Annie E. Casey Foundation and its grantees have spent substantial effort on understanding and fostering resident engagement. But it remains challenging. The site coordinator of a Casey-funded project in Denver explained: “Working with residents in this way taxes us to be other than we have been trained to be, to build on trust rather than on skill or experience, to find our way in the dark. The challenge is going into the unknown with no answers, searching together, having to become comfortable with the unknown. There is no road map, no job description, nothing to tell us what to do or how to do it.”¹³

It also can be time consuming and resource intensive:

The responsibility of staffing and supporting the PAC has made and continues to make very significant demands on staff. In addition to the burdens of guiding and facilitating an enormous number of meetings, [we have] had to continually walk the line between leading it and following its direction. Keeping it resident-driven has meant continually reaching out to and engaging new residents to replace those who drop away from the governance process. It has been especially difficult to engage families living in the large Lincoln Heights public-housing community, which comprises half the total population of the La Alma/Lincoln Park neighborhood.¹⁴

And the tension between relationship-building and doing is continually revisited:

It helped that we gave child care support, dinner, carpooling—and had staff support on logistics that freed us up to do substantive thinking and resources for training. We realized we needed to build relationships first; our story circles helped with this. We needed to know people’s life experiences and their community work—the deeper, more human part of what it takes to have relationships. And celebrating success is so important—it makes it fun.¹⁵

But as Bill Traynor notes in *Reflections on Community Organizing and Resident Engagement in the Rebuilding Communities Initiative*, “A community-building effort that lacks an ambitious agenda to change conditions is a pilgrimage to nowhere.”¹⁶

Issues of Race, Class, Culture, and Power Are Always Present

The rise, fall, and rebirth of communities is often a tale of ways in which race, class, culture, and power affect the lives of people. In many places, a simple driving tour of a community can illuminate the relationships between race, ethnicity, and neighborhood well-being.

Examining these issues not only helps one understand histories of oppression and why some neighborhoods are the way they are, it also helps one understand what takes place in meeting rooms as people of different backgrounds, education, races, and cultures interact with each other. When participants fail to understand the complex dynamics of a community—or begin to understand the issues but do not know how to attend to them—it is unlikely that good community development outcomes will ensue.

Good community development process recognizes that race, class, culture, and power are central issues in community development, creates safe opportunities for authentic dialogue, and addresses these issues in planning, resource allocation, implementation, and evaluation processes.

The task of addressing oppression and the challenge of cross-cultural communication never ends, but it needs to start. Good community development process recognizes that race, class, culture, and power are central issues in community development, creates safe opportunities for authentic dialogue, and addresses these issues in planning, resource allocation, implementation, and evaluation processes. Joan Walsh, in a Rockefeller Foundation monograph on community building, notes: “On a good day in a successful project it feels like the unfinished business of the civil rights movement is being completed before one’s eyes, as the people of every race and class background work together for the community’s good. On a bad day in a struggling project tensions around race and class can explode in a nightmare of suspicion and hostility.”¹⁷ The adage “go slow to go fast” applies here. Taking time to work on the underlying issues can lay the foundation for faster work moving forward.

Good community development process fosters collaborative conversations that become more strategic, holistic, and systemic over time.

Effective Collaboration and Conflict Resolution Are Essential

Effective Collaboration Enriches the Work

There is a palpable difference between a process that is going well and one that is not. Neither path is easy. In a process that is going poorly, there is often much unnecessary conflict, difficulty in making decisions, extensive turf protection, and escalated levels of competition for perceived limited resources. In a process that is going well, there are also many issues in conflict, but the participants have a capacity to work things out in a mutually satisfactory manner. Furthermore, there is a shared recognition that the problem has to be worked on and addressed together—not left for “someone else” to fix.

Trust and mutual respect characterize the relationships in collaborative efforts that work well. When healthy working relationships exist, there is a capacity to work

strategically at multiple levels and time frames, and this capacity strengthens over time. It includes:

- *Moving from myopic, task-focused conversations to enriched, big-picture conversations that draw upon the full range of experience of all participants.* One of the advantages of well-functioning, diverse groups is that the participants are able to draw from a wide range of daily experiences. When the process is seen as “safe,” participants bring their new observations and questions forward to the group, expanding the group’s knowledge.
- *Moving from simpler, more linear project planning to more complex and holistic theories of change.* As a group’s knowledge increases, it tends to establish more relationships between phenomena, improving its capacity to make strategic linkages and increase the impact of the change effort.
- *Expanding from delivering projects to strengthening and reforming systems.* Many projects, however valuable, are created to compensate for systems that do not work. As a community development process gains heft and capacity, the focus often shifts to reforming systems or creating new alternative systems that better serve the community development goals.
- *Expanding from a single geographic focus to connecting geographies.* When challenges are found in some communities, and the resources and opportunities are in others, strategic linkages must be forged. Linkages may be among communities, linking neighborhoods and regions, or other creative combinations.

Good community development process fosters collaborative conversations that become more strategic, holistic, and systemic over time.

Good community development process anticipates conflict and seeks to bring it to the surface and discuss it in ways that acknowledge the differences, improve understanding, and forge common ground.

Conflict Should Be Expected and Addressed

In a good process, not only will some conflicts be present at the table, others will be brought to the surface by delving deeper. This is normal and to be expected. There will be the conflicts of the moment—strategy, turf, ownership, and so forth—as well as those focused on correcting historic mistreatment and disenfranchisement. Chapin Hall researcher Robert Chaskin, in his work on neighborhood democracy, finds that when “there are fundamental conflicts among organizations (as was the case in several of the initiatives reviewed across sites), the legitimacy of the collective endeavor can be sorely challenged.”¹⁸ Addressing these conflicts, as a good community development process must, creates the need for many tough conversations.

Conflicts handled poorly can undo months of progress, or even blow up an effort. Conflicts handled well can become the backbone of a strengthened effort in which participants gain a deeper emotional connection to the group and increase their commitment. Good community development process anticipates conflict and seeks to bring it to the surface and discuss it in ways that acknowledge the differences, improve understanding, and forge common ground.



Good community development process is a shared enterprise. No one organization, much less an individual leader, can drive a good process. Yet good process also requires leadership—facilitative leadership that can move an agenda with a set of often loosely coupled partners. The next section discusses skills that grantees can develop to catalyze and drive community development process.

Good community development process . . .

- Requires advocacy, because it intentionally seeks to reform or upend existing processes in order to create a process that will lead to more investment, connection, and authentic participation, especially among those who have had the least voice.
- Is not merely a single process, but an intentional strategy that encompasses the various participatory initiatives in a community and effectively coordinates, links, combines, and supports these efforts to ensure that, to the furthest extent possible, they are working in concert, using a shared strategy and supporting a common vision.
- Responds to and reflects a widely divergent set of interests.
- Is not imposed on people—it requires their consent.
- Persistently ensures that community residents are meaningfully engaged and have sufficient power to influence decisions in ad hoc processes and governance structures.
- Recognizes that race, class, culture, and power are central issues in community development, creates safe opportunities for authentic dialogue, and addresses these issues in planning, resource allocation, implementation, and evaluation processes.
- Fosters collaborative conversations that become more strategic, holistic, and systemic over time.
- Anticipates conflict and seeks to bring it to the surface and discuss it in ways that acknowledge the differences, improve understanding, and forge common ground.

PARTNER
EXAMPLES
(FROM BETHEL
NEW LIFE IN
CHICAGO)

Beth-Anne Life Center
American National Bank
Goldblatt Elementary School
United Way
Mt. Pilgrim Baptist Church
27-Organization Anti-Crime Committee
Neighborhood Capital Budget Group
Westsidiers Organizing to Win
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Chicago Department of Human Services
Molade Child Development Center

Strengthening Grantee Capacity to Drive a Good Community Development Process

There is substantial and significant literature that examines the capacities of community development corporations¹⁹ and offers guidance on how to strengthen community development organizations. Although issues such as leadership and collaborative capacity are discussed, often it is without recognition of the complexities and challenges presented by the many different interactions within a diverse group of organizations and interests.

Successful community development efforts can involve a mind-boggling array of partners, collaborators, government entities, and efforts to engage neighborhood residents. Reading a short summary of the activities of Bethel New Life in Chicago²⁰ yields a list of more than 70 organizational partners. This list would undoubtedly grow significantly longer with a more in-depth analysis.

Despite a need to understand how to manage complex and dynamic alliances, partnerships, and collaboratives, community development grantees have few places to turn for assistance. For example, a search of the otherwise informative Web sites of the Local Initiatives Support Corporation and the Enterprise Foundation for assistance on collaboration, negotiation, partnerships, alliances, and similar subjects pro-

duces almost no resources, training courses, or guides. Indeed, some guides start from the premise that there are only the community development organization and the residents, with little or no attention paid to any other public, private, or nonprofit organizational partners.

Successfully catalyzing, facilitating, and managing a complex array of organizational partnerships while at the same time ensuring that the community’s voice is driving the direction of community development requires leadership with *process fluency*—a mixture of people, political, and collaborative skills that catalyzes and supports individuals and organizations working together to make change. In this section we will describe some of these skill areas and identify what we consider the most useful resources—many outside the community development field—for those who want to learn more.

Skill Areas

Constructive Dialogue

Many communities have lost the art of conversation when it comes to public issues. This is not an urban or rural phenomenon—it is an American phenomenon. Explanations and blame can be found in many places, but whatever the cause, residents of most communities do not have conversations about public issues. Good community conversations can help residents reclaim an issue, develop deeper understandings, reconnect as neighbors, and build momentum for action. The community dialogue movement, through such organizations as the National Coalition for Dialogue and Deliberation, the Study Circles Resource Center, and the Public Conversations Project, is building momentum and capacity as increasing numbers of communities

PARTNER EXAMPLES *(cont.)*

Argonne National Laboratory
Chicago Manufacturing Center
University of Illinois
Local School Councils
Bethel Christian School
Harold Johnson City College
Job Link Collaborative
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Ferdinand Realty
Umoja Care
Chicago Police Department
20-Church West Side
Isaiah Plan
Lutheran Family Mission
Day Care Action Council
Lucy Flower Academy
Lewis Public School
Chicago Park District
Children’s Defense Fund

HOW STUDY CIRCLE PROGRAMS WORK

In a large-scale study circle program, people all over a neighborhood, city, county, school district, or region meet in different study circles during the same period of time. All the study circles work on the same issue and seek solutions for the whole community. Then people from all the study circles come together in a large community meeting to work together on the action ideas that came out of the study circles. Study circle programs lead to a wide range of action and change efforts.²¹

recognize that embracing this simple but profound practice can produce many benefits.

Staff and leaders from community development organizations need to be able to participate in and design dialogues. Dialogues are often used at the beginning of an effort, to engage the community at the very beginning of a process. Dialogues can also lead directly to action, as many study circle processes now do.

Dialogue Resources

The National Coalition for Dialogue and Deliberation Web site (www.thataway.org) is chock-full of resources, links, descriptions of leading models, listings for training programs, and contact information for national and community-based resource organizations. More resources can be found at the Web sites of the Study Circles Resource Center (www.studyircles.org) and the Public Conversations Project (www.publicconversations.org). These include free manuals as well as listings of helpful books and case studies that have used dialogue to further their goals.

Effective Negotiation

The word *negotiation* sometimes gets a bad rap because of a sense that it means long, protracted, painful sessions in which teams challenge each other into the late hours to see who will break first. Yes, that is negotiation, but so is the conversation between two friends choosing a movie. Quite simply, negotiation is a conversation intended to produce an agreement. Over the past three decades, significant advances have been made in our understanding of how to improve the negotiation process. Negotiation strategy has advanced beyond the hard model (i. e., being belligerent and standing firm until

the other side gives) and the soft model (i. e., trying to get along through numerous concessions) to what is commonly termed “interest-based” or “principled” negotiation. Initially popularized by the best-selling book *Getting to Yes*, this problem-solving mode of negotiation is an absolutely critical skill for community developers, because agreements with community partners, residents, lenders, builders, building inspectors, city government, and others are critical to success. Good negotiators know how to identify their own interests and those of the other parties. They build shared

“Negotiation style is heavily influenced by development experience and knowledge. Interviews reveal that negotiation capacity is rarely a concern for private developers. However, it is hard for less experienced nonprofits to understand their own value to the partnership and the value exchange that occurs within the partnership. As such, nonprofits can be doubly challenged by not knowing their advantages and how to negotiate accordingly.”²²

Negotiation Resources

Getting to Yes: Negotiating Agreement Without Giving In, by Roger Fisher and William Ury, has been dubbed one of the most important books in the conflict resolution field by practitioners and academics. It is short, practical, and easy to read. There are a number of other books by each author in the “Getting” family that are also helpful. *We Are All Negotiators Now: An Introduction to Negotiation in Community Problem Solving*, by Xavier de Souza Briggs, insightfully and concretely blends negotiation theory and practice with community work (www.community-problem-solving.net). The Conflict Resolution Network of Canada publishes an extensive bibliography that can be found on its Web site (www.crnetwork.ca). A complete—almost to the point of being overwhelming—electronic resource center can be found at the Conflict Resolution Information Source (www.crinfo.org). Training in negotiation skills can be found at colleges, community mediation centers, nonprofit support centers, and similar places. Many consider the course offerings from the Program on Negotiation at Harvard Law School (www.pon.harvard.edu) to be among the best, and scholarships are often available. Additionally, the Neighborhood Reinvestment Corporation has recently published *Bridging Sectors: Partnerships Between Nonprofits and Private Developers*, which specifically examines the negotiation process in development deals.

criteria for decisions, know several ways to build agreements, and have a variety of strategies to break impasses. Good negotiators know the importance of long-term attention to building and maintaining effective working relationships as a basis for building trust and understanding. Not every community developer can become a great, creative, barrier-busting negotiator, but every community developer needs basic negotiation skills.

“Once, when asked the most important thing to emerge out of the civil rights struggles in Mississippi, veteran civil rights leader Bob Moses said, ‘the meeting.’ What Bob recognized then is that the voices, insight, and knowledge of sharecroppers who lived through the consequences of oppression were essential to understanding, overcoming, and reshaping the conditions that created their oppression.”²³

Facilitating Good Meetings

Meetings are at the heart of community work. Community leaders often attend meetings several nights a week, and community development organization staff sometimes feel as if they simply go from one meeting to the next. The ability to design and run productive, engaging, relationship-building meetings is a core competency for effective community development organizations. Many organizations that work in communities make a commitment to build the facilitation and mediation skills of their staff members in order to have the in-house capacity to guide important, recurring meetings.

Resources on Facilitation and Good Meetings

The longtime standard publication is *Making Meetings Work* by Michael Doyle and David Straus, two of the original innovators in this field. Excellent guides to facilitation include the amply illustrated *Facilitator’s Guide to Participatory Decision Making* by Sam Kaner and *Great Meetings! Great Results* by Pam Plumb and Dee Kelsey. Guides to mediation include *Mediator’s Handbook* by Jennifer Beer and Eileen Stief and *Mediation Process* by Christopher Moore. Additional sources for training can be found in the section on “Using Facilitators and Mediators” below.

Using Facilitators and Mediators

There are many professional facilitators and mediators who bring expertise to meetings and processes. Professionals can help create more productive meetings, resolve conflicts, and bring new energy. They can also be helpful with process design, structuring a series of meetings over time. Many help by coaching leaders and managers to build skills and capacity. A good facilitator can make an invaluable contribution to the process. Unfortunately, most facilitators and mediators make their living in arenas other than community development and often do not have enough understanding of the context to do well. Therefore, in a search for professional process assistance, it is important to assess whether a candidate has sufficient understanding of the particular milieu.

“The facilitator drafted the agreement and tailored it to the situation. It included a problem statement and a list of goals for the group’ (Paula Forbis, Barrio Logan). The agreement allowed partners to focus on what steps could be taken to improve air quality. In this way, it helped them adopt an action-oriented agenda.”²⁴

Finding and Selecting a Facilitator or Mediator

There are several professional associations and clearinghouses that can assist in your search for a facilitator or mediator, though it is often most helpful to begin a search within the community. Many colleges and universities have staff who provide facilitation services through extension offices, centers, and departments (such as urban studies, planning, or social work). Many communities also have a community mediation center that is a potential source of expertise—most mediation centers have their roots in work on interpersonal disputes, but many are now branching out into multiparty issues. You can find your local mediation center through the National Association for Community Mediation (www.nafcm.org). The International Association of Facilitators offers guides to selecting a facilitator on its Web site as well as a directory of professionals (www.iaf-world.org). Many mediators maintain a listing on www.mediate.com. All three of these sites have informational materials, listings of training programs, and links to other resources.

“The use of an outside facilitator was considered vital in helping to orchestrate the initial meetings of one of the partnerships because, as one interviewee put it, ‘the community didn’t like my organization and didn’t want to see me, so it was better to have someone else with a reputation like Emory University to come in as an independent resource.’”²⁵



Collaborative Community and Neighborhood Planning

There is perhaps no task more common to the work of community development than developing a community plan. The plan not only brings to life a community development organization's vision for the neighborhood, but it is also one of the most significant ways residents and stakeholders become involved in shaping the future of the community and the organization. Community planning processes can be uplifting, empowering, and transforming; they can also be boring, painful, and seemingly endless. Community planning processes often serve to establish the relationship between the organization and community residents.

Effective community and neighborhood planning processes are good meetings and events sequenced logically over time to build a plan whose rationale makes sense to organizers and participants. The most effective processes are designed *with* the community, not *for* the community. This is where the substance of community development must intersect with the process of community development. All too many guides walk you through the steps of a process—gathering data, doing market research, learning best practices, developing strategy, and so on—with little mention of who might be engaged in the planning.²⁶

On the other hand, most guides to collaboration are generic guides to process, with little discussion of specific contexts. Community development organizations need knowledge and skills in both process and substance if they are to lead the development of an uplifting and implementable plan. Organizations can often buttress the skills they have by using planning consultants or facilitators (see above) to assist their efforts.

Collaborative Community Planning Resources

Although much is known about effective collaborative community and neighborhood planning, little is available in a comprehensive, easy-to-obtain form. The best resource for constructing a planning process is *The Collaborative Leadership Fieldbook: A Guide for Citizens and Civic Leaders* by David Chrislip. Briggs offers a very helpful guide in *Planning Together: How (and How Not) to Engage Stakeholders in Charting a Course* (www.community-problem-solving.net). Also helpful is the somewhat expensive, heavily illustrated *Facilitating Community Change* by consultants who have worked extensively on healthy community initiatives (www.grove.com/store). When community conflict must be addressed, Carpenter and Kennedy's *Managing Public Disputes* and Susskind's *Breaking the Impasse* are very helpful. Some communities are using charrettes, a structured approach to engaging citizens in the design process. Resources can be obtained from the National Charrette Institute (www.charretteinstitute.org). Several cities and citizen groups that have embarked on major neighborhood planning initiatives have produced very helpful guides. They include the City of Spokane's *Neighborhood Planning Guidebook* (www.spokaneplanning.org/documents/guidebook.htm), Vancouver Citizen's Committee's *The Citizen's Handbook* (www.vcn.bc.ca/citizens-handbook), and the City of Hampton's *Hampton's Neighborhood Initiative: Lessons and Resources for Other Communities* (www.hampton.va.us/neighborhoods).

Collaboratives, Alliances, and Partnerships

Multi-organizational partnerships have come to define the contemporary approach to community development. This trend, driven by a desire for a greater impact, also stems from the recognition that no one organization can do it all. Furthermore, one of the ways to return capital to disinvested neighborhoods is through alliances with sources of private capital. Collaboration is often mandated by funders, both public

“Bethel has found that collaboration with a diverse array of partners is key to organizing around public safety and that collaboration has helped Bethel to move from a reactive approach to a more long-term participatory approach to neighborhood improvement.”²⁷

and private, who see it as the only way to make headway on complex social and economic challenges.

Collaboration is not easy, especially when partners are wary of one another. Moreover, the pressure of funding cycles and the desire for early results can place undue stress on developing relationships. At the same time, collaborative partners can plateau early, never getting to the tough issues of turf, race, and class, or dysfunctional approaches, saving those conversations for the hallways and pubs. Fortunately, we have learned much about collaboration in the past 15 years, and the path to overcoming the challenges to building trust and increasing impact is becoming clearer.

Collaboratives, Alliances, and Partnerships

The Council on Foundations (www.cof.org) offers two excellent free publications as a starting point. *Working Better Together*, by Scott Fosler, chronicles the growth in three-sector partnerships and discusses elements of success. The Council also publishes a bibliography that lists much of the existing literature. *Getting to the Grassroots: Neighborhood Organizing and Mobilization*, from the Community Collaboration Guidebook Series, clearly articulates the difference between “collaborative betterment,” a top-down approach, and “collaborative empowerment,” a community-driven approach, a differentiation first described by Arthur Himmelman (www.cfpciowa.org/pdf/grassrootsgb6.pdf). *The Collaboration Handbook: Creating, Sustaining, and Enjoying the Journey*, from the Wilder Foundation, describes the stages and factors of successful collaboration. Joan Roberts breaks new ground in her book, *Alliances, Coalitions, and Partnerships*, as she describes the internal elements of organizations that are effective collaborators.

The effort to build process skills is somewhat analogous to learning a new language—proceeding from learning vocabulary and simple sentences to constructing complex sentences and engaging in fluid dialogue. The acquisition of process skills follows a similar path, moving from basic knowledge and skills to an ability to effectively use various, more complex tools, to an ability to seamlessly use, adapt, and construct processes that fully reflect the context. Growth in process skills also means an ability to tackle new roles, starting with being an effective participant in a process, expanding to managing a community or multi-organizational process, and ultimately becoming a facilitative leader. And as with language, for which some people have an “ear,” some individuals have an innate capacity to grasp process skills.

It is this set of process skills, the ability to engage residents and stakeholders in joint work, that animates the “soft” side of community development: building community, democratizing the development process, building capacity, and empowering residents.

“Leadership is the process through which a group of individuals comes to develop a shared understanding of what they want to accomplish together and how they may accomplish it, mobilizes resources, engages in work intended to effect desired change, monitors its progress, and adapts its behaviors, resources, and even its shared understandings to reflect new information and insights.”²⁸



What Community Development Grantmakers Can Do: Some Final Thoughts from the Hewlett Foundation

Malka Kopell

This guide talks about the tools grantmakers and grantees can use to make community development work better. It discusses how to recognize good collaborative processes and how to improve processes that weren't so good to start with. We hope what we have presented is helpful. But before concluding, we'd like to leave you with a few ideas from the Hewlett Foundation and some of your colleagues in the community development grantmaking world about what we as funders can do to help.

Pay More Attention to Process

We all know that process—how people and institutions interact, communicate, get into conflict, work together, or even ignore each other—is an important part of community development. What we as funders can do is to ensure that process works well and supports the activities we want to support. Such activities include:

- *Doing more research up front.* This means figuring out what's really going on in a community—before you get too far into the project. Researching process issues includes finding out where the power is, where the connections are, where the money is, who

talks to who, who gets along, and who doesn't. Sometimes looking at historical patterns can help, but make sure you also study what's happening now—specifically, not theoretically.

- *Using planning grants.* Sometimes spending a little money up front will save you a lot of pain—not to mention money—later. Planning grants give you the luxury of focusing on “intangibles” like process. Then the trick is to pay close attention to what you find when the planning grant is over. Don't be afraid of bad news, even if it means delaying a project until more planning or important groundwork is done.
- *Helping grantees and their partners do a self-assessment.* Self-assessment can be a very powerful tool for helping grantees gain greater insight about themselves and their partners. When things are not going well, there can be lots of finger pointing and pet theories about what is to blame. By offering a self-assessment tool—and a safe space that allows the grantee to share information with the funder without fear of punitive action—grantmakers and grantees can develop better understanding about the path forward.
- *Funding process-oriented technical assistance.* A little technical assistance can go a long way, particularly when applied at the right points. Examples could include calling in a mediator to address a conflict between neighbors; training residents to prepare for a meeting with the planning commission; or facilitating a “visioning” meeting with developers and community members. It's also a good idea to have someone on board who knows about collaborative process and is paying attention throughout the project: to design process strategies that are meaningful and authentic; to anticipate (and hopefully resolve) difficult issues before they become insurmountable; and to make sure things are moving forward in the most productive way.

“Things were either so grandly articulated or so fuzzily articulated that the grantees had no idea what the funder was talking about. When push finally came to shove, the foundation looked up and said to the grantees, ‘That’s not what we meant,’ but it was too late. The community actors said, ‘We never understood what you meant anyway.’”²⁹

Guides to Self-Assessment

The original and still relevant guide to a community-wide assessment is the *Civic Index* by the National Civic League (www.ncl.org). This guide helps participants examine the depth of civic infrastructure in their community. A number of tools now focus specifically on collaboration and governance. The Center for the Advancement of Collaborative Strategies in Health has developed an online partnership self-assessment tool that is helpful in many policy settings (www.partnershiptool.net). The Leader to Leader Institute (formerly the Peter F. Drucker Foundation for Nonprofit Management) publishes several collaboration self-assessment guides (www.pfdf.org). The Beyond Intractability project offers a guide to conflict assessment on its Web site (www.beyondintractability.org/m/conflict_assessment.jsp), and the Conflict Resolution Information Source (www.crinfo.org) lists several others.

Understand Our Role as Grantmakers and How It Affects the Power Dynamic

We've talked about the importance of understanding the power dynamic of any community development initiative. Let's remember that we as funders affect that dynamic as well. Because we have money, people and institutions may listen to us more than they ordinarily would—and listening is always good, right? But they also might do things they wouldn't ordinarily do, and that isn't always good. People and institutions need to take actions that benefit them, and they need to be driven by self-interest. The funder's role can be to educate them and help them make the connection between participation and self-interest. As one former grantmaker put it, "You can lead a horse to water, you can even make him drink . . . but he has to know he's thirsty."

At the same time, foundations need to understand that our power is limited. Certainly in the funding arena, our contribution can look like pennies when compared with the share put forth by private-sector developers, not to mention the enormous role government can play, both as a funder and as a regulator. This reality makes being conscious of our funding partners and building relationships with them (and helping them build connections with community members and institutions) all the more important.

Do the Work That No One Else Does . . . and Talk About Things No One Else Will Talk About

We all know that some of the best community development initiatives can be highly “leveraged,” with many players contributing to its success. But even with a lot of supporters taking different roles and making different contributions, there are important jobs that don’t get done, either because traditional players aren’t really appropriate to do them, or because they don’t want to. Foundations can play an important role by taking on this work. For example:

- Bringing together parties that don’t usually work together
- Ensuring that community residents have a voice
- Enlarging the pie by coordinating with other resources (government, local foundations)
- Keeping an eye on the bigger picture—getting beyond individual agendas

Important to the success of all these roles is an understanding of process issues and power dynamics. In many cases, this means an understanding of two important underlying issues that often don’t get talked about: politics and race.

“Many foundations have moved beyond their traditional role as givers and now act as conveners, bringing together various groups within a community. As Gayle Williams Dorman, executive director of the Mary Reynolds Babcock Foundation in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, said in a Foundation ‘News & Community’ article, ‘It’s doing more than investing money. Foundations have the capacity to convene people who are doing civic work in their communities, so that they may learn from each other and support each other. It’s about supporting the people who are out there in communities working to broaden participation and democracy, to help them cross some of the lines of divisiveness—such as race and class—in society.’”³⁰

Politics: It's Right in Front of Us

As one community development practitioner put it, “You can’t talk about engagement without talking about politics and the role of policy.” How true that is—politics is a huge consideration in moving through any process. It can throw up major barriers—or it can grease the wheels. But for a variety of reasons many foundations shy away from politics, whether it be fear of controversy, of “getting in the middle,” or of in some way compromising tax-exempt status.

Understanding the politics of a community is not just important, it’s absolutely necessary. For foundations, that can mean doing a comprehensive assessment of elected officials, agency directors (and staffers), and organizations. It means looking at who voted for what, who testified and what they said, who has power and how they use it—and who doesn’t have power. It means looking at personalities and relationships (official and non-official), both in the past and right now.

Race Issues: Uncomfortable and Unavoidable

It’s easy to say that underlying race issues are important. It’s also easy to avoid talking about them—or learning about them, or dealing with them. Race issues are definitely a barrier to productive collaborative process. They may never be erased, but we as grantmakers can do a better job of understanding their impact—and perhaps work harder to remove the barriers they cause.

Understanding issues of race, like issues of politics, can be tricky and complicated. It helps to look at the history of these issues in a community to understand them—and in more than just a theoretical way. We need to be aware of the effect of race issues on what’s happening now, particularly with regard to power dynamics and the political structure.

Race and Philanthropy

There are a number of thoughtful pieces and a new guide that can help grantmakers develop a better understanding of this complex challenge. California Tomorrow has recently published *Leading by Example: Diversity, Inclusion, and Equity in Community Foundations*. This guide, which includes a CD-ROM full of resources, helps funders explore the diverse settings in which they work from the perspectives of inclusion and equity. *Vital Difference: The Role of Race in Community Building* from the Center for Reflective Community Practice at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology helps readers understand the implications for theory and practice (crp.mit.edu). The Aspen Institute Roundtable on Community Change (www.aspenroundtable.org) maintains a focus on the role of race and power in community work, and numerous resources can be found on their Web site. Two of special note are *Structural Racism and Community Building* and *Training for Social Equity and Inclusion: A Guide to Selected Programs*. Foundations funding race relations and racial justice organizations would be well-advised to read *Cultivating Interdependence: A Guide for Race Relations and Racial Justice Organizations* (http://www.jointcenter.org/misc_files/cultivating-interdependence.pdf).

“I think some of the toughest days early on were for that reason, where there were very low levels of trust in the African-American community . . . about sitting down at the same table with the community foundation, business leaders, and the city, none of whom were seen as allies . . . It certainly created some tension here.”³¹

Evaluate Better and Smarter

There has been a lot of thought—and talk—in the foundation world devoted to evaluation. Everyone is trying to evaluate more and do a better job of measuring indicators that connect to results.

One of the issues regarding evaluation that comes up when we consider collaborative process is what to measure. This is difficult not only because collaborative process is itself very complicated, but also because it is connected to many other things that could also be measured. It’s hard to know where the process leaves off and the “prod-

“Despite the importance of alliances, there are no standard frameworks in urban change or community development studies for guiding the analysis, design, implementation, or evaluation of alliance-building processes. Thus policymakers, program designers, practitioners, and researchers improve a great deal, especially concerning trust and relationships. Discourse on this aspect of the field’s activity is relatively disorganized.”³²

uct” of the process starts. One community development funder complains about the disconnect between the attention paid to the evaluation of the “bricks and mortar” benefits of community development projects and the lack of evaluation of the process that led to the bricks-and-mortar benefits or resulted in other important benefits to the community.

Another community development funder suggests that we focus our evaluation on our own role in the process. If we take the role of catalyst, for example, then our evaluation should measure how well we filled that role. At the same time, what we measure should be meaningful to the community at large. He suggests that the community should determine its own indicators of what a successful community development initiative would look like, and the funders should determine theirs (again, based on their functional role). But then our evaluators must do the work to ensure that these two sets of indicators link up in a meaningful way.

Resources on Evaluation and Collaboration

Much has been written about evaluation and collaboration in recent years. Several places to get started include: The Harvard Family Research Project Evaluation Exchange, which publishes a highly informative quarterly newsletter (www.hfrp.org); a publication on evaluation from the Aspen Institute Roundtable on Community Change (www.aspenroundtable.org); and the new book by Thomas Backer, *Evaluating Community Collaborations*. The Justice Department of Canada maintains a Web site on evaluation and citizen engagement (canada.justice.gc.ca/en/ps/eval/reports/01/citizen_engagement/ce_3.html), and the University of Wisconsin Cooperative Extension Service publishes a detailed guide, *Evaluating Collaboratives* (http://www.cecommerce.uwex.edu/pdfs/g3658_8.pdf).

Remember That It's Not All About Us

Whether we are a national foundation coming into a community or a place-based funder that is already a member of the community, it's important to remember that we're not alone in our work. And when we—or our grantees, for that matter—are in the business of changing (or adding, or improving) community process, we need to be mindful of how what we're doing connects with what already exists.

One way we can ensure that our contribution is a productive one is to share information with our partners in the community, beginning with any up-front research that is done. In fact, using community partners to help gather information is sometimes the best way to know what is really going on. Once our participation in the project is more fully underway, we should continue to be good listeners and good observers—particularly when we need to make important decisions. Finally, we should strive to communicate as clearly as we can what our decisionmaking process is and, when possible, try to involve our community partners in that process.



Grantmakers who have supported community development initiatives know there is no magic formula that yields instant success. Some neighborhoods are fighting to overcome challenges that are not only profound and pervasive, but terribly prolonged. Paying more attention to process can help grantees better articulate their strategy, deal with their local politics, and build broad commitment for short- and long-term change. If we as grantmakers can effectively help grantees with that work, it will increase their effectiveness and ours.

General Resources for Grantmakers

There are a growing number of publications developed specifically for funders treading this path. The Foundation Center, through its Practice Matters project (www.fdncenter.org/for_grantmakers/practice_matters), has published *Toward Greater Effectiveness in Community Change: Challenges and Responses for Philanthropy*. There is a summary and a discussion guide available. The full paper as well as several others focused on philanthropy can be found on the Web site of Chapin Hall (www.chapinhall.org), which maintains a Philanthropy and Community Change program. *Community Catalyst: How Community Foundations Are Acting as Agents for Local Change* discusses the importance of foundation capacity and commitment. It is available through the Community Foundations Initiative of the James Irvine Foundation (www.irvine.org).

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