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Evaluation of Neighborhood Progress, Inc.'s Community Organizing Support Program

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INTRODUCTION

In 1998, the Sisters of Charity Foundation of Cleveland began a program-related initiative to increase the availability, affordability and quality of permanent, affordable housing units for low-income and underserved families and persons in Cuyahoga and Lorain Counties. The Affordable Housing Initiative will award approximately six million dollars to community organizations over a five-year period. As part of this initiative, the Foundation funded more than 25 grantees to undertake a variety of non-capital projects. The Maxine Goodman Levin College of Urban Affairs, Cleveland State University was asked to evaluate the overall initiative and the projects of each of the grantees.

One of the grantees, Neighborhood Progress, Incorporated (NPI) was awarded $140,000 over two years to implement a Community Organizing Support Program (the Program). In Fall 2000, as the initiative progressed, the Foundation asked the Evaluation Team to conduct a more in-depth evaluation of NPI's Community Organizer Support Program. This in-depth evaluation will serve a dual purpose. First, it will provide NPI with feedback on its program and recommend ways to improve future programs. And second, the report will help the Foundation evaluate its current and future support of community organizing in Cleveland.

BACKGROUND

With funding from the Sisters of Charity Foundation Affordable Housing Initiative, the Community Organizer Support Program (the Program) was developed in 1999 by the Quantum Leap Program of NPI, in collaboration with the Center for Neighborhood Development, Maxine Goodman Levin College of Urban Affairs at Cleveland State University in response to the need for a local community organizer training program expressed by a number of Cleveland neighborhood organizations. The Community Organizing Planning Committee was created to guide the Program. It includes representatives from the two lead organizations, the Enterprise Foundation, Organize Ohio, Cleveland Neighborhood Development Corporation, Slavic Village Development and St. Clair Superior Neighborhood Development Association.

The goal of the Program is to enhance leadership capacity at the grassroots level and realize genuine resident participation in the work of community development organizations. It seeks to establish a community organizing culture in Cleveland that recognizes a commonly held set of core values and to increase the capacity of CDCs to engage in community organizing.

EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

This in-depth evaluation looks at the progress of the Program through August 2001. It draws on two sources of information. The first is self-reported information that was used by NPI in planning, evaluating and implementing the Program. The second is information collected by the evaluation team.

I. NPI self-reported information
Planning Phase
- Survey of Executive Directors of Community Development Corporations to identify perceptions and needs related to community organizing.
- Focus group with CDC organizers/outreach workers.

Implementation/Self-evaluation Phase
- Self-evaluation, semi-annual progress reports submitted to the Foundation and the evaluation team by NPI. This information is collected as part of the evaluation of the overall affordable housing initiative.
- Training participants evaluated each session and the overall training
- Telephone survey of Basic Training participants.
- Follow-up Survey of Executive Directors

II. In-depth evaluation
The second source is information that was collected by the Evaluation Team specifically for the purpose of this in-depth evaluation. These sources include:
- Two focus groups of Program Participants
- Observation of Executive Policy Forum

PROGRESS TOWARD OUTCOMES

As part of the Foundation's Affordable Housing Initiative, the Evaluation Team uses a utilization-focused evaluation model, collecting process and outcome measurements and engaging grantee organizations in an ongoing collaborative learning process. NPI worked with the Evaluation Team to develop the following Evaluation Plan, which outlines the desired outcomes of the project and the corresponding objectives and activities to achieve those outcomes.

Objectives	Indicators	Activities	Outcomes
1. Through a training program, motivate and assist 5 new CDCs to develop community organizing efforts.	Primary: - Number of CDC staff who complete training program - Number of CDCs adopting Community Involvement Plans - Number of calls to coaches - Attendance at monthly luncheons Secondary: - Number of new block clubs organized - Number of new issue committees formed - Number of residents attending meetings	1. 10-week basic training program for CDC staff. 2. Technical assistance through coaching/mentoring program 3. Monthly luncheon forums.	5 CDCs with new capacity to organize block clubs and issue committees
2. Through a training program, assist 5 CDCs currently involved in community organizing efforts.			A support system to increase capacity of 5 CDCs currently doing community organizing.
3. Increase commitment from CDCs' Executive Directors and Board of Trustees for community organizing.	- Funding from Board for organizing - Attendance at Executive Policy Forums	Hold 2 Executive Policy Forums related to community organizing.	A community organizing culture within Cleveland CDCs.
4. Develop a system of "best practices" for community organizing practitioners.	- Sample job description - Sample interview questions - Evaluation guide - Model employment package	Provide CDCs technical assistance on recruiting, hiring, supervising and evaluating organizing staff	
5. Encourage CDCs to recruit and develop new resident leaders.	Number of NPI-funded graduates of Neighborhood Leadership Cleveland.	Send 12 resident leaders to CSU's Neighborhood Leadership Cleveland program.	Enhanced leadership capacity at the grassroots level.
6. Support CDCs' marketing, project planning and annual summits.	- Number of requests to set-aside fund - Resident attendance at such public meetings - Number of projects developed with authentic resident participation	Provide funds for extraordinary organizing costs associated with large public meetings.	Authentic resident participation in planning of community and economic development projects.

NPI uses this evaluation plan as a guide for preparing progress reports to the Foundation and the Evaluation Team every six months as part of the collaborative learning process. This section summarizes the information provided in the progress reports, as reported by NPI.

Progress to date
The Community Organizing Support Program consists of Basic and Advanced Training classes, related coaching and luncheons, and other activities to promote a community organizing culture within Cleveland CDCs and enhance resident leadership capacity.

- Three Basic Training classes have been held, with the first class starting in 1999. A total of 52 people from 25 organizations have completed the training. Most of the participants were from CDCs. However, some non-CDC organizations also sent staff to the training, including Merrick House, W.E.B. DuBois, ISSAC (a faith-based group from South Euclid), and UHCAN (Universal Health Care Action Network). A fourth Basic Training class is planned for Fall 2001.
- One Advanced Roundtable training started in Spring 2001 and is ongoing. Initially there were eleven organizers, but due to high turnover and some top organizers leaving the area, six organizers participate.
- Since June 1999, monthly (except May 2000) organizer lunches have been held. Organize Ohio initially coordinated the lunches, but since April 2000 NPI subcontracted with CNDC to coordinate and host the lunches. The lunches have gone from an informal group to a formal CNDC committee with a chair that rotates every 6 months. The committee deals with issues such as sustainability and funding for community organizers. Average attendance at the lunches was 16 organizers per lunch. Moreover, the lunches led to a stronger partnership between NPI and CNDC.
- 10 coaches have been identified and 8 have been assigned to 14 of the 35 participants in the first two basic training groups.
- 12 resident leaders were sponsored by NPI to attend Neighborhood Leadership Cleveland at Cleveland State University.

One indirect but significant outcome of the Program is that NPI revised its "Operating Guidelines for Cleveland CDCs" in March 2000 to include, for the first time, a section on Community Involvement. Then in March 2001 the guidelines were revised again to include Community Involvement Plans as a "good practice" standard within the Community Involvement section. (NPI identifies three levels: "Threshold," "Good Practice," and "Best Practice") These guidelines are used by CDCs seeking operating support from NPI. Another related indirect outcome is that NPI's grant guidelines now state that the salary of a community organizer is an eligible use of core operating grants. However, although an eligible use, the numeric benchmarks used to evaluate CDCs still tend to be primarily concerned with bricks and mortar instead of benchmarks for number of block clubs or issue committees organized, number of leaders developed, number of victories won, etc. Thus, CDCs still tend to use their grants for physical development and rarely for an organizer, although there has been a recent increase in the number of proposals citing "organizer salary" in their budget.

In the Summer 2000 organizational assessments of NPI-funded CDCs, community involvement plans were recommended for 11 of the 15 CDCs. By Summer 2001, a plan for one CDC (Buckeye) has been completed, although not yet adopted by its board. A second plan is underway at Union-Miles. These plans would help build into CDCs the necessary institutional mechanisms to achieve authentic resident participation in planning of community and economic development projects.

To address its objective of increasing commitment from CDC executive directors and boards of trustees for community organizing, NPI planned to hold two Executive Policy Forums to discuss issues related to community organizing. However, these were delayed and the first forum was not held until July 2001. Because it was held so late in the grant period, there will likely be only a small impact from this Forum on NPI's desired outcomes during this grant period. But many of NPI's outcomes are long term in nature (a community organizing culture within Cleveland CDCs, for example) and build on other outcomes.

In addition to the activities listed in the original evaluation plan, NPI added several other activities also funded through the Foundation's grant. These included:

- A day-long retreat for organizers to brainstorm on future directions for organizing in Cleveland.
- A retreat for the organizing staff at Slavic Village Development.
- At the request of the organizers, the opportunity for all participants in the first Basic Training course to attend a one-week training session in Chicago at the National Training and Information Center. About five organizers attended.
- Funding to send 45 CDC resident community leaders and staff from five neighborhoods to attend 30th Annual National People's Action Conference in Washington, D.C. in March 2001.
- A pilot neighborhood-based leadership development program for residents from the Ohio City Near West CDC and the Detroit Shoreway Community Development Organization. (Note: This activity was added to the Program and was funded through a transfer from underutilized lines such as coaching. It was added in response to the need to better address the objective of encouraging CDCs to recruit and develop new resident leaders.) As mentioned above, NPI did provide 12 scholarships for Neighborhood Leadership Cleveland (NLC) at Cleveland State University, a program that provides training and support for existing neighborhood leaders. However, it became clear that a preliminary step was also needed to help organizers identify and develop new leaders. To date, one of the graduates of this neighborhood-based leadership training program has gone on to attend NLC although others may after applying their new leadership skills in their neighborhoods.

It is important to note that these additions, variations and deviations from the original workplan are not unusual. As grantees progress through their projects, they often need to adapt and revise their workplans. This is encouraged by both the Foundation and the Evaluation Team as a natural result of the utilization focused evaluation process.

NPI'S SURVEYS AND EVALUATIONS

As noted above NPI collected information in both the planning and implementation phases of its Program. NPI provided the Evaluation Team results from the five instruments they used:

Planning Phase/Needs Assessment
  I. Survey of Executive Directors of CDCs (May 1999)
  II. Focus group with CDC organizers/outreach workers (May 1999)

Implementation Phase/Feedback and Evaluation
  III. Basic Training evaluations by participants
  IV. Follow-up telephone survey of Basic Training participants
  V. Follow-up survey of Executive Directors of CDCs (July 2001)

I. SURVEY OF EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS (EDS).

In May 1999, before designing the curriculum for the training, NPI conducted a needs assessment survey of Executive Directors from 47 CDCs. Eighteen surveys were returned, a 38 percent response rate. The survey was distributed by Slavic Village to the CNDC membership list. A summary of the responses follows:

Is community organizing part of your organization's work? If yes, please give examples.

All 18 CDCs reported that community organizing is part of their organizations work. Specific examples include:
- Block Clubs (8)
- Issue Committees/Campaigns (6)
- Business Associations (5)
- Other (5)
- Safety (4)
- Not much of our work (3)

What are your organization's goals in using organizing?

- Address crime problems (7)
- Build/empower leadership (5)
- Create sense of community (4)
- Address code/housing problems (3)
- Use to guide our planning (3)
- Liaison with city (3)

Top 3 outcomes you hope to accomplish as a result of your organizing:
- A way to empower residents to have a greater voice solving their own problems (17)
- A way to get the word out on the street about the organization and its programs (17)
- A way to develop new leaders at the block level (16)

CDCs were asked to rank in order the top 10 areas they would like to see offered in the basic and advanced organizer training programs.

Top Ranked Topics for Basic:
- Keeping residents involved
- Roles of Organizer
- Effective Meetings
- Developing Leadership
- Nuts and Bolts

Top Ranked Topics for Advanced:
- Negotiation and conflict resolution
- Developing community collaboratives
- Team building
- Building bridges across cultures
- Comprehensive work plans
- Fundraising/resource development

CDCs were also asked about the preferred format for the training courses. Half of the respondents (8) preferred an all day program, one day per month. The other half was split between the other options. They were also asked what type of follow-up they would like to see after the initial training. Ten CDCs responded that they would like to see brownbags and 10 responded that they would like to see a program to provide mentors.

NPI was very responsive to the needs expressed by the CDC Executive Directors in developing the Program and designing the curriculum. One area of interest noted by seven of the CDCs that was not included in the original program is training related to special topics such as how to get results from the city, how to maintain momentum in block clubs and conflict management. The need for such workshops was reiterated by the Basic Training participants in the Evaluation Team's focus groups which are discussed in more detail below. In February 2001 plans were developed to add two significant components to the program, an Advanced Organizing Training, which began in April 2001, and an "Organizer's Tool Box" series that would address specific stand-alone topics. NPI's Training Calendar released in July 2001 announced dates for the first two Tool Box workshops in September and November 2001, covering investigative research and youth organizing. These Tool Box trainings are open to all organizers, with priority given to organizers within CDCs, and will likely continue to be offered monthly.

II. NPI FOCUS GROUP

As another means of seeking input before designing the curriculum, NPI held a focus group with CDC organizers or outreach workers. Their responses regarding training needs were consistent with the survey responses of the Executive Directors.

III. FEEDBACK FROM TRAINING PARTICIPANTS

At various points throughout the training program, NPI sought feedback from participants. This information was used by NPI to evaluate, and where necessary, to adjust the training. Since the start of the Program, there have been three Basic Training courses. For all three courses, participants were asked to evaluate individual training sessions, and for two courses, participants were asked to evaluate the training program as a whole at the end. Overall, the participants gave very positive and thoughtful evaluations about the content, structure and format, and the training team. Also, the curriculum seemed flexible, adding and changing session topics in response to these evaluations for each new group.

One objective of the training component of the Program was to familiarize participants about best practices in community organizing so that they would utilize these best practices in their daily work. As a way to assess progress related to this objective, one of the follow-up questions that NPI asked the training participants was, "What are some

things you are doing differently in your work as a result of this training?" The responses were encouraging:

- Door knocking
- Involve more people in leadership roles / leadership development
- Stepping back and allowing residents to take charge of issues
- Preparing agendas with chairperson more
- Listen more
- Empowerment focus
- Better understanding and appreciation of field and role of community organizer

IV. TELEPHONE INTERVIEWS

Finally, NPI conducted phone interviews in Summer 1999 with 19 participants of the first Basic Training group to get feedback on the coaching and lunches components of the Community Organizing Support Program. The feedback on the luncheons was mixed, but this was more because many organizers' busy schedules didn't allow them to go than because of the content of the sessions. A suggestion was made about the lunches that was implemented by NPI. The lunches were originally sponsored by one of the partners, *Organize Ohio* and all types of organizers were included. However, many CDC organizers stopped attending because they didn't relate to the issues discussed. There was also strong sentiment that CNDC would be a more appropriate sponsor for the lunches because it would lend credibility in the eyes of the Executive Directors. NPI now subcontracts with CNDC to coordinate the lunches, and they are held at CNDC's office.

With regard to the coaching aspect of the Program, seven participants interviewed preferred to meet with their coaches twice a month. The second most common response (five participants) was once a month. Even though they had coaches assigned to them, two of the organizers preferred to use other resources such as experienced organizers at their own CDC.

V. FOLLOW-UP SURVEY

In June 2001, NPI sent a follow-up survey to 47 Executive Directors of CDCs using the CNDC mailing list. While the first survey was intended as a planning tool to aid in the design of the Program, this second survey was designed with input from the members of the Evaluation Team and was intended to assess the CDCs' experience with community organizing over the two years that the Program had been in operation and to identify issues related to community organizing that may be useful in future planning.

The two surveys intentionally have several questions that are the same, but because they were intended for different purposes, they are not identical. The questions that do overlap provide some pre-and post- data that can be used to assess progress toward the Program's objectives using the indicators set forth in NPI's Evaluation Plan. The second survey was mailed to 47 executive directors. 21 responded (a 45% response rate). A

summary of the responses follows. Full responses to open-ended questions are attached in Appendix A.

The results from the surveys can be used to assess progress on three of the indicators:
1) Increased commitment of CDC Executive Directors and Boards of Trustees for community organizing as measured by increased institutional support for community organizing and the development of community involvement plans.
2) Increased community organizing capacity of CDCs as measured by increased staff time and budget allocated to organizing activities.
3) Increased involvement of residents as measured by resident's participation in leadership training programs and in CDC meetings and projects.

Increased institutional support for community organizing. Almost all (17 of the respondents) report that community organizing is an important part of their organization's work. However, this is less than the 100% in the first survey. This difference could be due to the fact that those who responded to the second survey were a slightly different group than the first one, and two of the respondents who said community organizing was not part of their work were CDCs that work with businesses, one was not a CDC and one said that another organization in their neighborhood did organizing. When asked in what way community organizing helps their CDC fulfill its mission, there was a range of responses, from "we do not need to exist if we are not including the community" and "helps establish strategic direction" to "market our organization". In general, as a measure of the existing community organizing culture within CDCs, these responses indicate that the executive directors understand how community organizing helps fulfill their CDC's mission. The test, as always, is whether these CDCs implement this understanding in their practices.

CDCs reported that they are involved in various types of community organizing work, ranging from block clubs to issue campaigns. The graph below summarizes the responses from this survey (with 21 respondents) and compares them to the responses from the earlier survey conducted in March 1999 (with 18 respondents).

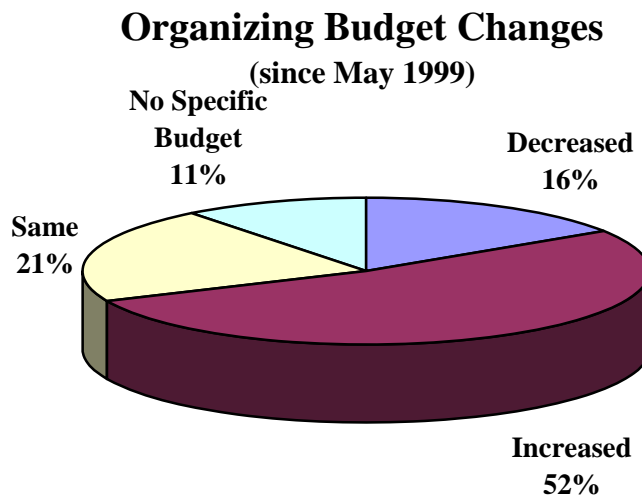## Examples of Community Organizing Work
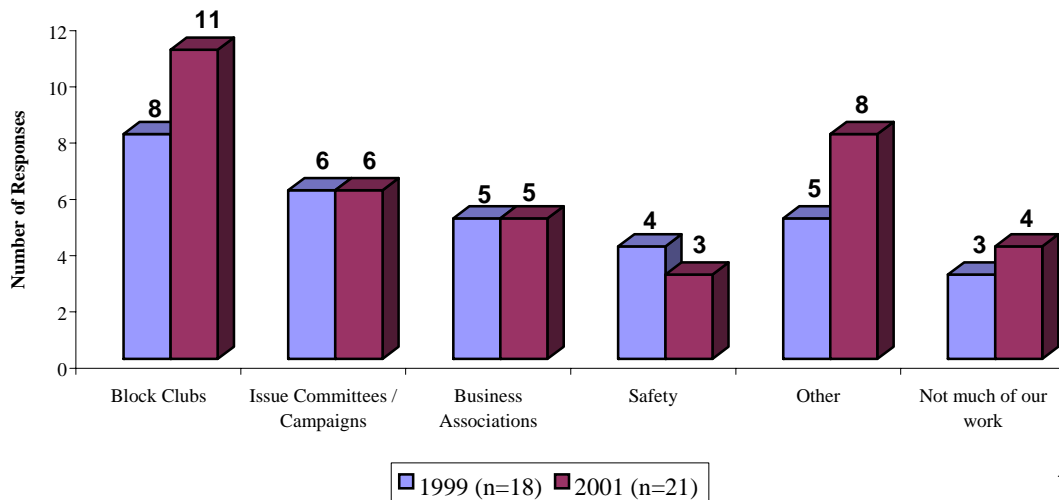
In 2001, three additional CDCs reported block club activities as part of their community organizing work; otherwise the results are very similar. Some of the "other" activities reported include: monthly neighborhood forums, members, annual town meeting, democratic and participatory elections for Board, and residents providing input on trainings, programs and services.

Increased community organizing capacity of CDCs. A CDCs ability to engage in community organizing is in some sense determined by the availability of funding for this purpose. Recognizing that lack of funding for organizing is a limitation oft-cited by CDCs, the survey asked how CDCs fund their community organizing staff and activities. Please note that respondents could name more than one source of funding. Their responses can be summarized as:

> Sources of funding:
> - CDC Operating Budget/Various Programs (6)
> - Public (5)
>   - CDBG
>   - Ward Allocation/Neighborhood Development Funds
>   - City Council for COPS program
>   - Government Grants
> - Foundations (5)
> - Americorps (3)
> - Enterprise Foundation (2)
> - Special Events Fundraising (2)

To determine whether CDCs had increased their capacity for community organizing work, the survey asked about changes in organizing budget and staffing since the inception of NPI's Community Organizing Support Program. This graph shows that over half of the respondents reported that they had increased their community organizing budget in the last two years.

Organizing Budget Changes
(since May 1999)

No Specific Budget 11%

Decreased 16%

Same 21%

Increased 52%

The survey also asked about staff time dedicated to community organizing. Across all respondents, the amount of staff time dedicated to organizing has increased by 84% over the two-year period. At the time of the earlier survey in May 1999, 12 CDCs reported having community organizing staff with a total of 11.3 FTE (full time equivalent). In this survey, 5 CDCs reported that they added a community organizer to their staff for a total of 5.05 FTE. Further, 8 CDCs reported that they had reassigned a staff person's duties to include community organizing, with a total of 4.45 FTE reassigned. These responses indicate a significant increase in the capacity of CDCs to organize, as measured by staff time dedicated to community organizing.

When asked what influenced their CDC's decision to add a community organizer position or reassign staff time to community organizing, three cited funding availability (Americorps), three mentioned the increased emphasis (inclusion in NPI's operating guidelines) placed on community organizing by funding sources such as NPI and one attributed it to the availability of the basic training. In addition, five CDCs added "other" reasons that influenced their decision, like the need in the community.

Increased involvement of residents. As an indicator of genuine resident participation in planning of community and economic development projects, the survey asked executive directors about any changes in the way their CDC has involved residents within the last two years. The number of CDCs that checked the following changes is given below:
- Identified new leaders in our community (14)
- Held resident meetings to solicit input with regard to organization/CDC programs and projects (11)
- Increased the number of community residents who volunteer in our organization/CDC (10)
- Added new and/or more board members who are community residents (9)
- Added new and/or more committee members who are community residents, who oversee, monitor and/or help plan organization/CDC programs (9)
- Assisted in the formation of new/additional block clubs in our community (8)
- Initiated changes in the culture of our community (for example, residents believe they have a greater role in decisions that affect their neighborhoods) (8)
- Held an annual meeting or summit open to all community residents (6)
  - Residents provided input with regard to issues and priorities (5)
  - Residents played major role in planning and leading event (5)
  - Residents voted in election of trustees or officers (5)
- Other (4)
  - Planned a neighborhood summit
  - Participated in 4th of July parade sponsored by Kiwanis
  - Coordinated coalition of neighborhoods around traffic
  - Improved response time for residents concerns; sense of major/minor victories

It is important to note that the responses cannot be interpreted as the number of CDCs currently engaging residents in these specific activities. Rather, these responses can only be interpreted as the number of CDC's reporting changes in the ways they involve residents.

Effectiveness of Training in Helping Organizing Staff in Their Work
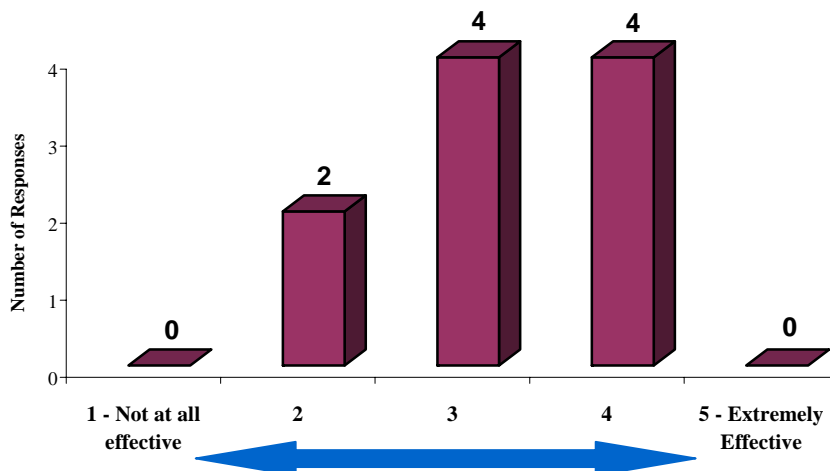
Basic Training. More specific to the training component of NPI's Community Organizing Support Program, 12 CDCs (57% of respondents) reported that they sent staff to the Basic Training. The graph above illustrates the impression of the executive directors of the effectiveness of the basic training in helping their organizing staff in their work. As the graph indicates, the perception is that the training is effective, but not extremely effective.

Challenges and Barriers. For the purpose of planning future programs, NPI asked the executive directors to consult with their board presidents and to list the five greatest challenges or barriers to including community organizing as part of their CDC's work. This information can be used to improve NPI's support of community organizing.

The responses (open-ended) are summarized below. The frequency of responses is noted where it is greater than one. For categories where the responses may not be obvious or identical, the actual wording of the responses is listed as well.

Lack of funding (18)
Organizational capacity/Staffing Issues (12)
- Need more organizers (5)
- Need bilingual staff
- HUGE educational curve for new staffers
- Staff burnout and resignation
- Staff development
- Board development
- Large service area
Politics (4)
Lack of time (4)

Resident apathy/Lack of Resident Participation (4)
Identifying and Developing Leaders (3)
Community Conflicts/Issues (3)
- organizing by geography allows people to segment into affinity groups
- affinity groups do not feel the need to engage others in community
- lack of neighborhood cooperation

Balancing competing programs (2)
Training gaps (2)
- access to training on working with business executives
- getting some TA providers to recognize there are different types of organizing; not just one "school" set in stone and removed from real world and politics

Relations with Other Organizations (2)
- there is another organization in the community that has the responsibility to organize
- establishing a strong link with other organization in community that has responsibility to organize

Other (16)
- establishing clear roles for organizer and community members
- getting people actively involved, not just complaining but doing necessary follow up. Getting people to not expect staff to do the work themselves
- difficult to get residents to focus on the key issues during meetings
- motivating and retaining residents / creating awareness / educating
- sustaining motivation and broadening participant/volunteer base
- receiving feedback from residents on programs and services
- more transient population in neighborhood - less sense of investment
- greatest complaints are "nuisance" that are almost impossible to solve
- overcoming past "failures" within the neighborhood
- recognition of value of program
- demands of networking and coordinating support services
- Communication! People don't communicate (listen poorly and don't express themselves clearly)
- too many expectations and demands
- distinction between outreach and organizing?
- program development
- really difficult ongoing problems top the list of issues, like drugs and crime

Many of these challenges or barriers are issues inherent in community organizing, whereas others could be addressed by NPI and other supporters of community organizing.

These issues were used to develop the agenda of topics for discussion at the Executive Policy Forum on community involvement that NPI held in July 2001.

EVALUATION TEAM INFORMATION

The second source of information was collected by the Evaluation Team as part of the evaluation of the overall initiative and information that was collected specifically for the purpose of this in-depth evaluation. These sources include:

    I. Two focus groups of Program Participants
    II. Observation of Executive Policy Forum

I. FOCUS GROUPS WITH PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS.

In June 2001, the Evaluation Team conducted two focus groups with Program participants. In the first group, six community organizers from four CDCs participated. These were considered the "advanced" group, where community organizing was a large part of their job, if not their dedicated position, and most were also planning to participate in the Advanced Training. In the second focus group, four community organizers from three CDCs participated. All four have positions where community organizing is only part of their job. In addition, three organizers who could not attend the focus groups, one "advanced" and two from non-CDC organizations, responded in writing to the focus group questions.

A synthesis of responses from both focus groups follows, organized by topic of discussion. Where the advanced group's responses differed from the other group, these differences are noted. The final section provides concluding comments and recommendations by the Evaluation Team.

Expectations of program, and how well it met those expectations:
- Overall, it met the expectations of the participants. It provided them useful tools that they could and did apply.
- One participant expected more training on how to develop leaders in the neighborhoods – he felt that the training assumed that there already are leaders.
- One noted that the coaching made up for any shortfalls in the training.

Relevance of program to work
- Many expressed a concern that the way community organizing was taught is different than the way it is viewed in their organization, although the things they were taught are still relevant to the needs of the community.
- The overall consensus was that the training was relevant. Tools and strategies were most useful, and some also used books, training materials, support of coaches and other organizers.
- Those participants who had community organizing as only part of their job found the training helpful (surprisingly helpful sometimes) in other various aspects of their job.
- There were mixed responses regarding one topic of the training – the tenant / landlord organizing. The advanced group did not find this relevant to today's CDC-oriented organizing, but the other group found this piece helpful – especially the role playing.

- Some participants in the advanced group and the non-CDC organizers felt that more neighborhood level issues would have been relevant – not just block club organizing.

Specific things learned that are helpful in organizing
- How to empower residents to set the agenda and run meetings, instead of organizer always doing that.
- Door knocking (to "fish" rather than "sell").
- Using flip charts in meetings.
- Asset mapping.

How could the training be improved?
- Add more hands on training. For example, go to a neighborhood and observe a block club meeting and discuss it in class. Participate in some actual organizing as part of the training.
- Use more practical examples from Cleveland – what's working and what's not. Trainers had lots of experiences and successes, and organizers would have liked to hear from them more. Also, bring in more people who are doing the work everyday.
- Archive CDC successes through videos or case studies, and use them in training and as resources for organizers. Document things like St. Michael's and how residents of Lee-Harvard chased off drug dealers. Need institutional memory, because organizers don't stay long and need a way to share these stories.
- Leave time at end of sessions for questions and to talk openly about how to take back and apply what you've learned to your organization.
- Focus less on "back in the 70's" because that style of organizing is not relevant today and may be a barrier to CDCs and City Council members (who provide much of the funding for organizers) embracing organizing now
- Discuss not only how to organize block clubs, but also realistic expectations regarding block clubs, like how many is enough, how many can one organizer be expected to staff, etc.
- Clarify the reasons for including non-CDC organizers in the training – if included, then curriculum needs to change (especially the experimental learning examples currently centered around CDC examples). This comment came from both the advanced group and a non-CDC organizer.
- Include training on how to deal with racism and sexism in public meetings; also training on working across race and class lines, and building alliances.
- Conflicting opinions regarding the National Training & Information Center in Chicago. One participant recommends it, while another was dissatisfied, feeling as though their approach did not fit hers.

Who else or what other organizations should be involved in the training
- Executive Directors. Organizing skills may be useful to them in putting together social and physical development projects. More upfront involvement of residents would lead to less opposition.
- Other CDC staff. They could use mediation training and other techniques to get residents more involved in CDC's work

- Non-CDC Organizers. Include them only if change curriculum. Or offer a different training program to non-CDC organizations that are involved in organizing: advocacy groups, human rights, civil rights, environmental, etc.
- Others to include as trainers or guest speakers: Gail Long at Merrick House, Gloria Aaron, CPAACH, and Mikelann Rensel at CNDC.

Organizing activities since training
- Several organizers mentioned using techniques learned in the training to transform a situation into an organizing victory. Specific examples include:
    o Resident leaders now prepare agendas and run meetings
    o Residents cleaned up area between two streets. They had been complaining to City about it for years, but organizer empowered them to organize themselves to clean it.
    o Residents of three houses used to vandalize each other and never participated in neighborhood events, but now come to block club meetings and talk to each other
    o Residents petitioned for traffic calming devices, called, documented, and embarrassed City, and achieved what they wanted
    o Organizer used "Identifying a Problem" skill to change focus of how to work with a problem house
    o Residents organized themselves to apply for CityWorks project
    o Organizer transformed a negative leader into a more positive leader through empowerment and using mediation techniques
    o A group of block club leaders (some of who may be interested in running for council) have been meeting and working on their own instead of working together with CDC. Whereas the organizer presented this as a negative outcome, he also mentioned that this may encourage the CDC to open their door more to residents.
- Many of the organizers were dealing with common issues around leadership development. There is a tension that can emerge when developing leaders. Some emerge as powerful and others fall back. Organizers would like more information on how to encourage leadership without creating a power struggle at a micro level. One mentioned that their organization was not wholly prepared for the increase in leadership.

Further Training Needs
- Content of Training
    o Diversity
    o Youth development
    o Could spend more time on mediation, because so important
    o Neighborhood level issue organizing – for example, how can residents deal with issues like crime and drugs?
    o How to help get direct access to top decision making people in city and state government
    o Working across race and class lines
    o Building alliances

- o Advanced training/"Roundtable" made up a list of about 18 topics (i.e., group dynamics, youth organizing, how to supervise organizers, etc.)
- Format of program
    - o Focused and smaller follow-up training workshops open to all, in addition to the Advanced Roundtable
    - o Luncheons also smaller and more focused
    - o Luncheons should also be appropriate for non-full time organizers
- One organizer would love to shadow an experienced organizer for a week.

Opportunities in Organizing
- Opportunities lie in collaboration with other organizers on a citywide basis, and statewide organizing
- Other opportunities, with the time and support, would be door-knocking everyday, aggressively advancing issues, meeting with a new leader everyday, and not having to run other programs.

Barriers
- Need more organizers on staff.
- Need to build links between Community Organizers and other CDC staff, especially development staff. This means creating a mindset where everyone in an organization is a community organizer.
- Perception that community organizers are volunteers and/or only there for a year. To combat that perception, CDCs either need more funding so community organizers can stay longer and have a career path, or need to build long term relationships with residents instead of relying on one-year relationships with organizers.
- CMHA issues. For example, the police have their own training for resident leaders, and there is a lack of response from them re: safety and crime issues. Also, neighbors won't participate in events that involve CMHA estates.
- One participant mentioned that the reputation their CDC has is a barrier. Some people don't like the organization and are resistant to listening.
- Barriers when Board does not support the residents' initiative.

Advice for Sisters of Charity Foundation
- Provide funding for organizers' salaries and also for the operating activities of organizers
    - o While additional funding for organizers is always needed, it is also important to structure funding so that the roles and responsibilities of the community organizer are clear, and that there are evaluative techniques where the organizer **and** the CDC would be evaluated or self-evaluated. Also, evaluations should recognize that each CDC is unique – don't always compare to other CDCs.
    - o Goal – at least one full time community organizer at each CDC. This would help create a city wide organizing movement.
    - o Suggest that Sisters of Charity help CDCs look for additional funding from national foundations for salaries and the necessary support systems.

> If funding for organizers came from a foundation or national source instead of through council members, organizers would have more latitude.
> o Also, when funding staff, it may not necessarily be pay for more organizers, but rather a better salary may help prevent turnover.

- Have small grants available to graduates of the organizer training or to organizations for special programs (i.e., create a new block club, a new leadership training program, other programs as defined by residents)
- Fund production of a videotape of Cleveland organizers and resident leaders talking about issues and victories as a way of archiving local success stories.
- Don't limit organizing support to just block club organizing. Need issue organizers and work with coalitions. Need to shift and think in a larger way. Block clubs will come up on their own – other issues need more support, like health care, schools, economic justice issues, the environment, welfare, homelessness, etc. – shared solutions to shared issues. One participant suggested funding such a training through Organize!Ohio
- Work on educating Boards and Executive Directors so organizers don't always have to defend their job.

NPI as convener
- NPI is the appropriate organization to sponsor the training for CDCs because it shows institutional commitment and legitimizes CDC involvement in organizing.
- One drawback is that while NPI draws people, because NPI is the funder, people may feel pressured to participate.
- Participants raised the concern that it may be a conflict that one of the trainers works for an organization that funds their CDCs. They feel like they can't always be honest and open. Agreement that NPI is most appropriate to convene it, but maybe NPI staff should not play a hands-on role as trainer.

Coaching
- Sensitive issue sometimes because of the close "incestuous" CDC community – concern about confidentiality and trust. May need more coaches who are not from a CDC.
- Some suggested that coaches be assigned during Basic Training to help the organizers process and apply what they are learning.
- A more obvious assignment of coaches – some didn't know if/when they had one
- Some mentoring occurs naturally with experienced organizers in their own organization, or through networking with others at luncheons.

Community Organizing within CDCs
- CDCs see organizing as block clubs and safety, not as developing residents to be Board members and to have them give input on development projects.
- CDCs tend to be conservative and cautious – don't like negative press and pressure. Should caution new community organizers that confrontation between residents and the CDC will arise, and the community organizer will be caught in the middle.
- Is role of organizer to try to change the organization to make it more responsive to residents?

- CDCs are the place for community organizers, but we need to have open conversations about potential conflicts.
- Need to impress on CDCs that they need more organizers, and to give comp time to organizers who work evenings.
- Idea that CDCs are not set up to support community organizers, and community organizers are not integrated into the CDC. Feeling that community organizer gets "dumped on" for anything that has to do with community.
- Example given of a CDC involving residents in a development project and those residents and organizers getting training/education in development but that this is unusual, and likely not to be replicated. Sometimes CDCs only look for resident input after a project is already a done deal.
- Many organizers feel their role is not respected within the organization. Exception was from organizers whose ED also went through the training.

II. EXECUTIVE POLICY FORUM

In July 2001, NPI held their first Executive Policy Forum for directors and board members of Cleveland CDCs with the topic of "Exploring Levels of Community Involvement". Mr. Greg Watson, former Executive Director of the Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative in Boston spoke about his experiences with Dudley Street, specifically the lessons learned about community involvement. His presentation was followed by a group discussion of the top six issues or barriers identified through the survey. Directors and board members were asked to identify strategies for addressing the barriers of: funding, staff/organizational capacity, politics, great expectations of community organizers, resident apathy, and leadership development. The discussion was followed by a panel of three local CDC community organizing and resident involvement experts.

This Executive Policy Forum was the first of two related to community organizing that NPI proposed in its Evaluation Plan. With an objective of increasing the commitment from CDCs' Executive Directors and Board of Trustees for community organizing, NPI hopes that this activity will move toward a community organizing culture within Cleveland CDCs. NPI held the Forum late in its grant period, and likely will not hold a second related to community organizing. As a follow up, NPI will hold a training for a team of three from each CDC (Executive Director, Board member, and organizer) on how to develop a Community Involvement Plan.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the information and feedback summarized above, there are two categories of recommendations. The first is specific to NPI's Community Organizing Support Program. The second is broader in scope and intended to guide both NPI and the Sisters of Charity Foundation as they explore ways to continue to support community organizing efforts in Cleveland.

Recommendations specific to NPI's Community Organizing Support Program:

1. **Advanced Training and Workshops.** There is strong affirmation from the training participants for adding the advanced level of training, and the Organizer's Tool Box training series fills the need expressed by Executive Directors in the 1999 survey regarding a need for special workshops in addition to the Basic Training. These two additions complement the Basic Training, and should be continued as part of the Program.

2. **Coaching.** Some organizers mentioned they had very positive coaching relationships, but this was not the case across the board. There may need to be a more obvious assignment of coaches, because some organizers did not know if or when they had one. Also, there was concern about confidentiality and trust with coaches – a sensitive issue sometimes because of the "incestuous" CDC community. More coaches who are not from a CDC are needed, and NPI should emphasize a careful matching between participant and coach. NPI may want to make the coaches available during the training as well to help in the application of learning and to provide feedback to the organizers.

3. **Training Content.** The role-playing and the participatory teaching techniques were well received and should be enhanced. In addition, the content of the training could be made more relevant if it included:
    a. More training on city-wide issues, not just block club organizing.
    b. More time for discussion at end of sessions as a way for organizers to prepare to apply learning in their organization and their neighborhood.
    c. One-to-one personal feedback to participants at various points in the program.
    d. Some exposure to other organizing styles and mediation techniques may be included so that organizers can discern when confrontation is necessary or when other strategies are warranted.
    e. Familiarize organizers with other resources available in the community such as the Cleveland Mediation Center so that, if a situation warrants it, organizers can make referrals.

4. **Training for Executive Directors and Development Staff**. There are very few full time community organizer positions within Cleveland CDCs. Only nine CDCs (27% of respondents) reported having full time community organizer positions in CNDC

and NPI's 2001 Staff Salary and Benefits Survey. There was a consensus that there is a need for more staff positions dedicated to community organizing. However, it is important to recognize that community organizing skills and techniques are also helpful to people in positions other than full time community organizing positions. For example, the Basic Training participants who have community organizing as only part of their job found the training surprisingly helpful in the various other aspects of their job. Moreover, there was a consensus from the training participants that executive directors and other development staff should go through the organizer training to gain and appreciate those skills, techniques and philosophy. Currently, community organizing positions seem to be isolated from the rest of the operations of the CDCs, and their positions not valued. High turnover is a recurring problem but it is probably unrealistic to think that this will change. Many organizers are intentionally short-term, i.e. they are Americorps, JVC or Vista volunteers on time-limited assignments. Including other staff in the training may be a way for community organizing to become more a part of CDC culture. It may be possible to develop an abbreviated version of the organizer training for non-organizing staff.

Further, given the high turnover among organizers, it may be more realistic to think of community organizing as an entry-level position within a CDC. Training all CDC staff in organizing techniques would make it more of an organizational function, rather than the function of an individual who may be around only for a short time. And it may be worthwhile to use part of the training to introduce organizers to other CDC functions, so that they are prepared to move on to other positions within the CDC and have an appreciation and understanding of the full scope of the work that is done by the CDC.

5. **Build respect for Community Organizers.** Community Organizers feel they deserve more respect for their work, as demonstrated by salary, benefits, and recognition.
   a. As CNDC and NPI reported in the 2001 CDC Staff Salary and Benefits Survey, community organizers are the only professional level staff position paid under $25,000 per year. 33% of CDCs reported paying under $25,000, with 11% paying under $20,000.
   b. CDCs should also consider giving comp time for community organizers who often work evenings and weekends. In the focus groups, one organizer reported having no comp time for all her evening block club meetings. In the Salary and Benefits Survey mentioned above, 61% of CDCs report having flex time, but some policies seem much more flexible than others.
   c. In addition to salary and comp time, organizers want recognition for their hard work. NPI may want to consider adding an award for community organizing, or recognizing their efforts somehow, at the next Community Development Awards.

6. **NPI as Funder and Trainer.** If CDCs are the target audience, participants agreed that NPI is the appropriate organization to run the program. Their role as funder of CDCs has two effects: 1) CDCs feel obliged to send staff to training. Whether that is

the best way to recruit or not, it is effective. And 2) it shows the institutional commitment of NPI to the integration of community organizing into a CDC's work. Yet it is important to point out the hesitancy of the six participants in the focus group of advanced organizers with regard to NPI's dual and sometimes conflicting roles as trainer and funder. NPI should be aware of this perceived conflict and take steps to address this.

Broader Issues for NPI and Sisters of Charity Foundation to Consider:

1. **Consider community organizing in the context of a larger vision for the community.** Participants in the Executive Policy Forum on Community Involvement (July 2001) brought up an interesting issue – what is the distinction between community involvement and community organizing? Community involvement seems to be a larger, more outcome-focused issue where resident involvement in a CDC's mission will ultimately improve the quality of life in the neighborhood. Community organizing, on the other hand, could be seen as a tool to achieve this intermediate outcome of community involvement. The Forum was nominally about community involvement, but the discussion tended to focus on community organizing as the only tool. Another interesting distinction was articulated in an evaluation of Chicago's community organizing grant program by the Woods Fund, which concluded that organizing has been "heavy on technique, light on vision." They point out that organizing in Chicago has become an end, rather than the means to achieving the community's vision. The challenge for NPI and community organizing in Cleveland is to continue to support and build capacity around community organizing but to do it in the context of a broader community vision for systemic change.

2. **Recognize short-term, transformational victories.** Community organizing is a long-term process. Outcomes and results are not always readily apparent. But in evaluating investments in community organizing, it is important not to lose sight of the transformational victories that occur as part of the process. For example, an organizer was able to transform a negative critic into a leader of a community computer center by using the skills and "best practices" that she learned through NPI's Community Organizer Support Program. While the actual outcomes of this community computer center may not be known this early in the process, a leader was transformed and is now serving her community. On a different level, the East West United Neighborhood Traffic Coalition originated at one of the organizers' luncheons. The Coalition has the potential to achieve long term, positive outcomes in the neighborhoods involved. But in the short term, this coalition should be recognized as a victory in its own right because, as NPI reported, it has taken CDC organizing to a new level by helping create an issue-based coalition that crosses neighborhood boundaries.

3. **Expand the Tool Kit.** In the focus groups, some organizers expressed concern with the emphasis on the confrontational, direct action approach that is presented in the NPI training program. This approach focuses on mobilizing residents for actions that

confront powerful people and institutions in an effort to get them to behave differently. This approach is not relevant for all organizers. One participant suggested that NPI should focus less on the organizing style of "the 70's" because that style of organizing is not relevant today, and in fact may be a barrier to CDCs embracing organizing now. Another organizer was dissatisfied with the training received at the National Training & Information Center in Chicago, especially with the militant style they promoted.

Two of the Executive Directors of CDCs expressed similar concerns in the survey. One Executive Director listed the following challenge or barrier to including community organizing in their CDCs work: "Getting some Technical Assistance providers to recognize there are different types of organizing; not just one "school" set in stone and removed from real world and politics." Another Executive Director mentioned the tendency of organizing to create affinity groups, which "do not feel the need to engage others in community."

There are alternative models of organizing which focus less on achieving power through confrontation and more on achieving consensus through collaboration and empowerment. As mentioned above regarding training content, NPI may want to consider adding some training on discerning when confrontation is necessary or when other strategies are warranted. Workshops could be added to provide a more in-depth understanding of some related skills such as identifying allies, building coalitions, collaborative leadership and accessing community resources, etc. In this way the organizer's "toolkit" would be expanded and potentially more relevant.

4. **Expand connections with other local and national groups involved in community organizing.** The Program should introduce CDC organizers to organizers working in other types of organizations. This cross-fertilization can facilitate collaborative organizing activities on issues that cut across neighborhoods and often address city-wide concerns. There are many opportunities to network with other local groups involved in community organizing – both around issues related to community development and other city-wide issues which many Basic Training participants mentioned. For example, in recent years, a new national trend has emerged where new alliances have been built among labor organizers, environmental activists, and social justice advocates around issues of economic justice (like globalization, living wages, etc.). Locally, Cleveland has an active religious and social justice community involved in many issues, and organizers of different issues use distinct techniques and strategies, from which other organizers could learn much. Besides, the issues are often intertwined – poverty often being the connective tissue.

   There are several national networks that support organizing, like ACORN, IAF, DART, and Gamaliel, with which potential collaborative efforts could be explored.

5. **Enhance the neighborhood leadership development training.** One of NPI's desired outcomes of the Program is to enhance leadership capacity at the grassroots level. This component recognizes that one of the fundamental and ongoing activities

of community organizers is to develop leaders among neighborhood residents by empowering them to identify and work at solving problems in their neighborhood. In addition to a leadership development module for organizers in the basic training, NPI also provided scholarships for resident leaders to attend Cleveland State's Neighborhood Leadership Cleveland program.

However, the NLC program is designed to offer training and support for existing neighborhood leaders. Two community organizers and the staff of Neighborhood Leadership Cleveland were interested in developing new leaders among neighborhood residents. In response, organizers from Ohio City Near West and Detroit Shoreway Community Development Organization, along with Cleveland State's NLC staff, developed and facilitated a neighborhood-based leadership training course, funded through the Program. The intent of this one-time pilot program was to bring together active block club members from the two adjacent neighborhoods and give them the skills and confidence to take on leadership roles within their block clubs. Another purpose of the training was to help distinguish the role of the organizer from resident leaders by a "re-contracting" of roles. Equally as important, there was a "train the trainer" component in which the two participating community organizers were trained to conduct future training programs based on the model. However, to date, no future programs have been planned.

Ten residents participated in the pilot training program. The neighborhood-specific curriculum was developed in consultation with established neighborhood leaders, and included topics such as leadership styles, communication, facilitation, meeting basics, neighborhood resources, and problem solving. This neighborhood-level, leadership training program represents a more intentional process through which organizers can help develop grassroots leaders. It is structured so that potential leaders can learn new leadership skills quickly and begin to apply them in their neighborhood. The intended result is a broader base of trained, emerging leaders who can work in collaboration with the community organizers. The training hopes to enhance the skills of the neighborhood leaders and make the work of the organizers more effective.

One recommendation is that some follow up be done to determine the effectiveness of this training, looking specifically at the leadership roles that have been taken on by participants. If appropriate, this pilot project could be replicated in other neighborhoods with a customized curriculum. As an alternative, NPI should consider incorporating more train-the-trainer material into the Community Organizer Support Program as a way of helping organizers develop neighborhood leaders. This would be another way of enabling organizers to pass along the leadership and organizing skills they have learned through the Program.

CONCLUSION

As part of the Sisters of Charity Foundation's Affordable Housing Initiative, NPI's Community Organizing Support Program has the potential to have a positive impact on the work of community development corporations. NPI has made significant progress over the two years of the Program. The Evaluation Team agrees with training participants that, if CDCs are the target audience of the Foundation's support, NPI is the appropriate organization to run the Program. It shows NPI's institutional commitment to the integration of community organizing into a CDC's work.

Throughout the two-years of the project, NPI has continually sought and responded to feedback from the community development community and the program participants. The Program has evolved as result of this feedback and it can be expected to evolve in the future in response to the more in-depth feedback provided in this evaluation report as well as to the ongoing input from participants and executive directors.

Despite some delays in getting started, and some roadblocks along the way, the Community Organizer Support Program has made progress toward meeting its objectives to:
1) Increase the capacity of CDCs to engage in community organizing
2) Increase the commitment of executive directors and boards of trustees for community organizing
3) Develop a system of "best practices" for community organizing practitioners
4) Enhance leadership capacity at the grassroots level, and
5) Realize genuine resident participation in the work of community development organizations.

Over the two-year period of the Program, CDCs have taken steps to increase community organizing capacity. They have added organizing staff and increased the budget for organizing activities indicating a commitment by executive directors (and their boards). New leaders have been identified and in some cases, trained in leadership skills. Opportunities have been created at CDCs for increased resident involvement.

At the same time, the Program has only begun to address the need. With the high turnover rate among organizing staff, the need for training remains high. And programs are needed to recognize and reward the work of organizers to reduce the turnover and to encourage new people to pursue jobs in organizing. There were many useful suggestions from both the surveys and the focus groups regarding ways to improve the content and delivery of the Program (basic and advanced training, coaching, lunch meetings), additional supports that could be provided through the Program such as workshops, educating other CDC staff and boards regarding the value of organizing, etc. These deserve serious consideration by NPI.

But these are the easy changes/improvements. The more difficult, fundamental questions that were raised through the surveys and focus groups in this evaluation are:

- Should non-CDCs be involved in the Program and if so, which types of organizations and how should they be involved? If non-CDCs are involved, is NPI still the best organization to sponsor the Program?
- What is the role of NPI? While the consensus was that the Program should be sponsored by NPI, questions were raised about whether it can effectively be both the funder (of CDCs) and "trainer"?
- What should be the focus of community organizing—block club issues like safety and traffic or larger cross-cutting issues like a living wage, school reform, economic justice, health care, the environment, housing and homelessness, etc.? How can this be tied to a community wide vision for change? The way in which these questions are answered will determine the content of the Program.
- Should the pool of "best practices" be expanded to include other types of organizing (i.e. consensus building) and local success stories?
- What is the most effective process to develop capacity and empower neighborhood residents as leaders and should that be a part of this Program? How can community organizers be trained to do this?
- What is the most effective process to develop capacity and empower neighborhood residents to inform the work (including the development projects) of the CDCs? How can community organizers be trained to do this?

These are strategic as well as logistical questions that need to be answered.

The final, most important question is how will community organizing in Cleveland be sustained? The Foundation provided much needed seed funding to get the Program started. The momentum generated by this funding should not be lost. There was a sense that Foundation funding gives the organizers more latitude than the traditional funding from the City Council person. However, other sources of funding need to be identified to continue the training and support organizers. The Sisters of Charity Foundation can facilitate this discussion and can be helpful in leveraging other local and national foundation funds to assist in continuing the Program. But the key will be the level of commitment by NPI. If NPI truly considers community involvement to be a "Good Practice" by CDCs (as stated in NPI's Operating Guidelines), then NPI should be prepared to support this function, just as it supports other functions of CDCs. If NPI is committed to this, it will need to institutionalize organizing within its own structure and assist CDCs to do the same.

In conclusion, the investment in the Community Organizer Support Program has yielded significant results. In concrete terms, the Program has trained organizers, enabled them to realize successes and victories in their neighborhoods and, perhaps most importantly, initiated a conversation among CDCs and organizers about the role of organizing in the CDC culture in Cleveland; putting community organizing back on the "map."

One next step is for the Foundation to convene a community-wide conversation (beyond CDCs) to address the question of how community organizing fits within a broader community vision for neighborhood and community development and change.

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