TOOLKIT
Number 1

Systems Improvement

Training and Technical Assistance Project

BUILDING EFFECTIVE COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

OJJDP

Prepared by the Institute for Educational Leadership with funding from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice

IEL

About IEL

For more than thirty-five years, the Institute for Educational Leadership (IEL)—a non-profit, nonpartisan organization based in Washington, DC—has worked to achieve better results for children and youth. At the heart of our effectiveness is our unique ability to bring people together to identify and resolve issues across policy, program and sector boundaries. As a natural outgrowth of our work, we have created and continue to nurture diverse networks across the country.

Today, IEL is working to help individuals and institutions increase their capacity to work *together.* We are building and supporting a cadre of diverse leaders, strengthening the capacity of education and related systems, and informing the development and implementation of policies. Our efforts are focused through five programs of work: *Developing Leaders; Strengthening School-Family-Community Connections; Governing; Connecting and Improving Systems that Serve Children and Youth;* and *Improving Preparation for Work.*

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Background on SITTAP and the Toolkits

Background on SITTAP

In an era of devolving federal authority, there is growing recognition that federal agencies must do more than merely provide services or administer programs; they must find better ways of working with states and communities to improve the well-being of children, youth and families.

The Systems Improvement Training and Technical Assistance Project (SITTAP) reflects that shift and the on-going commitment of the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) to developing community-based collaborative solutions to prevent and control juvenile crime and victimization by reorganizing and reforming service delivery systems. These comprehensive community initiatives are collaborative efforts in which representatives from a broad cross-section of the community identify their most pressing problems, make decisions about how to tackle them, set goals, and hold themselves accountable for achieving results.

Funded by OJJDP, the project is operated by the Institute for Educational Leadership in partnership with the National Civic League. The SITTAP initiative is designed to develop, expand, and enhance the skills and capacities of juvenile justice/child welfare systems and communities to make systemic changes leading to an integrated system of care for youth at-risk, delinquent youth, and their respective families. While the project serves a number of OJJDP grantees, the primary target for services is 11 grantees under two initiatives: Safe Kids/Safe Streets and SafeFutures.

About this Toolkit

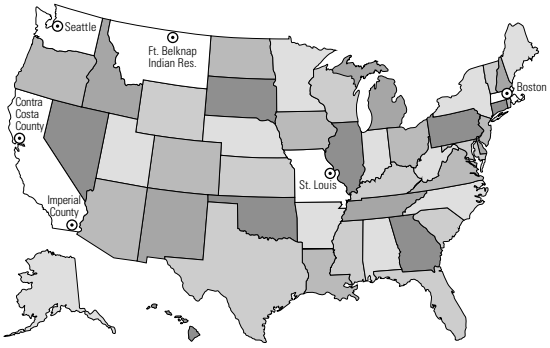
This toolkit is designed to provide ideas and linkages to other resources that will increase the capacity of demonstration projects engaged in systemic reform efforts to bring together organizations and individuals, develop shared goals, and implement strategies to achieve them. It offers case study examples and a variety of tools communities may want to use as they consider plans for implementing, monitoring and institutionalizing these strategies based upon the opportunities and needs of the community.

This toolkit is one of several resources developed to strengthen and sustain the capacity of OJJDP sites served by SITTAP to achieve and sustain their systems reform goals and effectively address the related challenges. Other toolkits will address topics such as: Building

Sustainability; Using Data Effectively; and Family-Centered, Culturally Competent Partnerships. These resources are also designed to educate and inform other communities and the field about how they can more effectively pursue community-based systems reform.

Safe Kids/Safe Streets

The Safe Kids/Safe Streets initiative applies comprehensive, community-wide strategies to the reduction of child abuse and neglect. Building on a multifaceted strategy grounded in research about the causes and correlates of juvenile delinquency as well as effective prevention and intervention techniques, the program explores the linkages between child maltreatment, domestic violence and juvenile delinquency. Safe Kids/Safe Streets challenges communities to improve community response to the abuse and neglect of children and adolescents in order to break the cycle of childhood victimization and later delinquent and criminal behavior. Safe Kids/Safe Streets is being implemented in Chittenden County, Vermont; Kansas City, Missouri; Huntsville/Madison County, Alabama; Toledo, Ohio; and by the Sault Sainte Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians in Michigan.



SafeFutures

The SafeFutures Program to Reduce Juvenile Delinquency and Youth Violence (SafeFutures) is a 5-year demonstration project that seeks to prevent and control youth crime and victimization through the creation of a system of care in communities. This system of care will enable communities to respond to the needs of youth at critical stages in their development by providing them with appropriate prevention, intervention, and treatment services and imposing graduated sanctions. Grantees were selected to represent urban, rural, and American Indian communities that demonstrated some prior experience with and a continuing commitment to reducing crime and victimization through comprehensive community assessments, strategic planning, and interagency collaboration. SafeFutures is being implemented in six communities: St. Louis, Missouri; Boston, Massachusetts; Contra Costa County, California; Imperial County, California; Seattle, Washington; and Fort Belknap Indian Community, Montana.

1 COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS
The Key to Progress and Results

Many excellent case studies can be found on the world wide web with one of the best collections maintained by OJJDP (see resource section). Boston's experience can be found in the OJJDP publication, *Promising Strategies to Reduce Gun Violence.* Information on Bethel New Life can be found on its web site at *www.bethelnewlife.org.*

Communities are full of tough problems. Youth violence, poor school performance, children without caring parents, the lack of real opportunity—each of these challenges and many more just like them give us pause. They are complex, they are important, and they will not go away quickly.

But communities around the country have made progress on these issues. Boston, through a concerted effort literally stopped youth homicides for two years. Faith-based community organizations such as Bethel New Life on the south side of Chicago, turned the need for caregiving into a neighborhood economic development opportunity, helping children, families, and adults at the same time.

The core lesson, the fundamental truth, and the bottom line is that a partnership was at the heart of each successful effort. Every player—community-based organizations, local government agencies, the business community, neighborhood organizations, and individuals—was important. But no one player could successfully tackle the challenge by themselves.

To use a sports metaphor, a great shortstop does not make a great baseball team. Eight additional players are needed, each with their own position and role, to make a successful team.

ICON KEY

- Case Study
- Key Principle
- Assessment Tool
- Tips

Different Partnerships for Different Tasks

Effective communities have many different kinds of partnerships—each appropriately linked to the others. For example, a community wide partnership, such as the Local Investment Commission in Kansas City, Missouri, brings together citizen leaders from all walks of life, the state Department of Social Services, and a extraordinarily diverse set of local public, private, and non-profit organizations to drive a results-based agenda for children and families. Their big-picture policy and funding

A full case study of LINC can be found on their web site at *www.kclinc.org.*

focus is an essential element of bringing a shared institutional and community agenda to the challenge.

That partnership would not be successful without the dozens of school-based and community-based partnerships that bring together parents, front-line workers, school teachers and counselors, local service organizations and others who work together to help children and families succeed and improve neighborhoods. It is the mixture of partnerships that supports everyone's efforts to achieve better results for children and families.

Finding Partners, Finding Focus

Partnerships spring from all sorts of places. Sometimes they emerge from a working relationship—the leaders of two youth serving organizations that have worked together for years invite a small group of people from the juvenile justice community to explore better ways of working together. Opportunities—especially funding opportunities—bring partners together. And all too often, a crisis or a particularly shocking incident brings partners together.

No matter the catalyst, effective partnerships do not emerge overnight because unlike a baseball team, not only are the roles for each partner unclear, the rules of the game need to be written.

In moving forward, it is important to understand the relationship between the partners and the substantive focus. The partners determine the focus and the substantive focus determines the partners. That interrelationship is the guiding principle in assembling an effective partnership. For example, the leaders of two youth-serving organizations with their new partners may decide their community needs a comprehensive youth development agenda. Once the partners make that their focus, other partners need to be included to work on that task; and some of the original partners may choose to not move forward. In other words, the focus needs to fit the interests and resources of each of the partners, otherwise a partner will not see a reason to stay at the table.

If It Were that Simple . . .

Making sure the partners and the focus match seems easy, but all sorts of issues underlie the relationships among the potential partners. Issues of race, class, and culture are present, making it difficult. There are power

and resource differentials. Some partners may think others are wrong or just do not "get it." Turf and the need to compete for scarce resources can make partnering tough.

Further, plans for action do not write themselves. Determining how and when to move forward is a major effort.

Patience becomes the byword, but patience without a roadmap for moving forward can lead to frustration. Following a brief discussion of language and definitions, the next section offers a straightforward set of steps in building an effective partnership. These steps are the roadmap for action.

Partnership, Collaborative, Coalition or ?

Efforts to bring together organizations and individuals for action dot the landscape of communities and neighborhoods. They take many different names.

The term "partnership" has been used in this document because it is straightforward and for many, it does not sound like jargon. Others prefer the term "collaborative." For them, the root of the word—co-labor—or working together, is descriptive. Further, for some, the word "partnership" has a legal connotation of formality that misses the inclusive, flexible notion that for them is embedded in the word "collaborative." In both collaboratives and partnerships, there is often a desire to be inclusive and involve diverse stakeholders that both reflect the diversity of the community and involve the wide range of stakeholders necessary to achieve the goal.

"Coalition" is used in two different ways. A narrow definition focuses on a set of players, typically of like mind, who share a common goal and are involved in some campaign-like activity such as electing a candidate or stopping drunk driving. A broader definition of "coalition" embraces all activity that brings together two or more entities in shared action.

This guide draws upon the literature and real-world experience of community partnerships and collaboratives. When using these words, we mean:

A collaborative is a group of community leaders who use an inclusive strategy to establish shared goals and agree to use their personal and institutional power to achieve them.

2 THE BIRTH AND GROWTH OF A COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP

Creating a community partnership is a craft, not an exact science. It involves many variables, many people, and multiple issues, which pull the effort in different directions. Though many publications on collaboration provide a step-by-step guide, this process of building a partnership is usually fluid, not linear. Community partnerships, to be successful, must reflect their context. What will work in Harlem is different from what will work for the Navajo Nation.

Further, each community partnership faces different challenges. The election of a new mayor, a change in funding priorities of the local United Way, or the retirement of a longtime leader can be a formidable challenge to a community partnership no matter where it is located.

And despite important differences, all community partnerships face some of the same tensions. Some members will want to focus on ensuring "good process"—making sure there is time to build trust and every decision is thoroughly deliberated. Others will say, "we know what's wrong, we need action now." Some will think big, others will want a more narrow focus. Advocacy and political action is an essential part of the strategy for some, others will prefer to focus on what can be done administratively. Successful community partnerships are able to find a balance among these tensions and others, able to forge a path that everyone can support.

All of these observations are intended to drive home the message that each community partnership is unique. There is no cookbook. Rather, partners need to work through these issues for themselves, using the experience of others as guidance. The stages are offered in the form of a planning tool that can be used to forge the path that will work for your community.

Getting the Partnership Started

Some conveners start a community partnership by reaching out to people they already know. Others want to reach out to everyone, making sure that they do not exclude anyone. Resist both of these natural

courses of action and start with some analysis that creates a correlation between the potential partners and the potential focus.

To start, a small group of leaders can systematically discuss a series of questions that help navigate one of the first tensions of a partnership—how to be inclusive on the one hand, and how to keep the partnership to a manageable size on the other. Typical questions include:

- What is "the community," is it a neighborhood, a set of neighborhoods, the city, or the region?

  This question can be used to start the analysis and end the analysis, for it often does not have a "neat" answer. A neighborhood-focused partnership may need representation from citywide organizations to respond to the next question. A citywide partnership may want to involve leaders from specific communities where there are projects that focus on the goals of the initiative. The boundaries in each of these instances can get blurred. They often need to blur. But everyone should be clear on the primary geographic focus of the partnership and how representatives from different levels serve the primary goal AND see enough focus on their interests to keep them at the table.

- Who do we need to get things done?

  Here, conveners need to look for partners that are oriented toward implementation and action, that may hold a position of influence in the community such that others will follow, or just have that "can-do" personality.

- What is the makeup of the community in terms of perspectives people hold, as well as the demographics of the community?

  One of the most common errors made in assembling a collaborative is to rely solely upon traditional leaders in a community who all too often represent the dominant race. Effective partnerships engage institutional, civic, and natural leaders who reflect the demographic diversity of a community. Remember, sometimes there are only two or three individuals who are seen as leaders of the particular identity group (for example, gays and lesbians, Latinos, etc.) but they may be "gatekeepers" rather than people who can organize people from their identity group.

Do your homework. To find out who your community's real leaders are, ask a number of people from different sectors such as those who work with members of the community, small business owners, and respresentatives of social and civic organizations. Indeed it is out of the diversity of perspective that creative ideas commonly arise.

- Who can genuinely speak with authority on the challenge we are seeking to meet? Do we want staff members or board members from participating organizations?

Sticky issues can surface in answering these questions. Partners may not want a "staff-driven" partnership because it does not truly reflect the community, but board members may not be seen to have enough detailed knowledge to help solve known knotty challenges. The answer usually lies in developing a balance among the various kinds of members or in developing complementary structures. Kansas City's LINC, mentioned above, has a Commission comprised solely of citizens and a Professional Cabinet which bring staff together.

- Do we have representatives of the families/consumers we serve?

It is very important to include families and consumers in the community partnership. It is also a challenge to keep them involved. They should represent a significant percentage of the participants, not only for their voices to be heard but to include a diversity of opinions in the process. When planning meetings, think about time and place: Can parents get away during the workday to attend? Will they need childcare? Is the meeting place easily reached by public transportation? Be sure the families and consumers at the table are full participants in the process, not just "tokens." They should not be isolated when dropped into a meeting process with which they may not be familiar. Their input should be sought at all times, not only at certain points of the agenda. The chairs have a responsibility to create an accessible meeting and an inclusive process. (For more information on working effectively with families, see Toolkit Number 3—Family-Centered, Culturally Competent Partnerships.)

- What are the " hidden communities" within this community?

  Almost every community has small pockets of people who represent different cultures. They might be the Latinos who work at the meatpacking plant in rural Iowa or the Russians who seem invisible in southwest Portland, Oregon or recent immigrants who are fleeing the war in their homeland. It is important to locate these hidden communities and develop relationships that allow you to reach these communities effectively.

- Who do we need to help us raise funds?

  Who are the successful grant writers in the community? Who are the people who can open doors to funders? Who are the people who can organize events to raise money? Who are the people on the funders' "grapevine" who will recognize projects that would interest those funders? Many partnerships seek to have funders or those knowledgeable about fundraising at the table from the beginning to keep the partnership focused on the role of financial issues and on raising funds from the earliest stages of the collaborative.

- This sounds like a tough balancing act. Should we set up quotas for each group?

  One trap community collaborations often fall into is the numbers game (i.e., putting emphasis only on the number of participants from each group). Numbers are not as important as skills, knowledge, and access. Obviously, all stakeholders need to be represented, but the point of building a collaboration is to get things done through an inclusive process. It is also important to remain fluid at this stage. Once individuals and organizations are invited to the table, they may have different ideas about the composition and size of the partnership. It also is important to not isolate any one group. Think of the way you catch the eye of a colleague at a meeting when a contentious issue comes up. Does every person have one or two persons with whom they can comfortably touch base when a tough issue comes up? At your first meeting, you need to ask who is missing and who needs to be invited.

The First Meetings of the Partnership

First meetings are critical to the success of the community partnership. Many community leaders feel "meetinged out." They go from one meeting to another, often with a similar set of participants and topics.

What is different about this effort? How will the first meetings illuminate what is different?

Many communities do not have effective meetings. There are no written meeting agendas, powerful people dominate, and the "real" issues do not get discussed.

At your first meeting, set basic ground rules for interaction to create a positive dynamic. Consider using a skilled facilitator. Typical ground rules are:

- One person speaks at a time.
- Be respectful.
- Listen as an ally.
- Be concise and stay focused on the agenda.

First meetings should be substantive. Share an overview of the issue or problem. Facilitate a discussion, asking these questions:

- What do we need to understand about this issue?
- What are the barriers for this community to effectively resolve/dismantle/address this problem?
- How do the organizations at the table work on the issue? What is their mission or vision?
- How can we address these barriers as a group?
- Do we want a community partnership to help us work together?
- Do we have the right people at the table for this effort?

As the group works on the substantive issues, it is important to work on two broad questions.

- Do we have sufficient shared understanding of the issues, the challenges, and the opportunities to answer the next question?
- Are we (or at least most of us) willing to start a sustained collective effort to tackle these issues?

Once the group agrees to move forward, it is important to tackle important organizational questions. After the large group discusses these questions, consider using a smaller group to prepare a written proposal for the entire group. Organizational questions typically include:

- What is our mission?
- How often do we meet?
- Do we have subgroups—committees, working groups, etc.?
- How do we decide? Will partners make decisions by majority rule or consensus?
- What are our expectations of each other as partners?
- How will the group resolve conflict?
- How will partners share responsibility for organizing and leading the meetings?
- Who prepares and contributes to the agenda?
- How will partners handle logistical arrangements?
- Under what circumstances should there be an outside facilitator?

Set answers to the above questions are not available. Not only do they need to be worked out in your partnership, the process of working them out will strengthen your partnership for the hard work to come.

Getting the Partnership Ready for Action

There are many conceptual frameworks for developing a plan. Most partners have gone through an exercise such as developing a vision and an action plan or walking through the steps of building a mission, goals and objectives.

Most partnerships initiate a community assessment process that allows them to tackle a basic question. In order to make progress in their area of focus, does the community need more of the same (e.g., more services, more playgrounds, more social workers) or does the community need to rethink how it approaches the challenge? In most cases, the answer is both. That latter challenge—rethinking the approach—is where the partnership must engage in hard work—tackling difficult issues ranging from turf and ego to power and oppression.

The rethinking of the approach is often called systems reform. Systems reform is just what it suggests, changing and improving the way the system works. It might include a redeployment of resources, an effort to focus on prevention, developing more culturally appropriate services, changing the way decisions are made, or any other strategy that helps a community better address its challenges and reach its vision.

Successful partnerships create ample time to have that dialogue. Many partnerships schedule one or more retreats or a longer meeting for this phase of their work. Why take the time? If you move straight to action, typically the group will move through the process based on current community norms, or the norms of the most powerful and dominant person or organizations at the table. In other words, the partnership will pursue the status quo. Part of systems reform is changing the way the community does business—including different people at the table, listening instead of acting, creating an inclusive decision-making process, and setting up the expectations of equity. It takes a commitment to the process to make that happen.

Partnerships develop different strategies based on the opportunities and needs in their community. The types of services partnerships may offer are:

- Coordinate services and strengthen communication between agencies and clients.
- Provide technical assistance and training to increase the skills and/or knowledge of personnel and build capacity within the field.
- Organize resource development and sharing through coordination of purchasing programs or by creating joint grant proposals.
- Organize community residents to be stronger advocates and take more responsibility for their community.
- Conduct research projects to assess the needs of the community and help identify gaps in service.
- Promote service needs and advocate for changes through legislative and other policy avenues.
- Educate the community on the issue by promoting events, establishing a speakers' bureau and/or publishing a community newsletter.

A central element of an effective strategy is discussing evaluation and knowing how the partnership will learn from its efforts. Resources on evaluation are in Chapter 4.

Conversations about evaluation can also help clarify the plan. Can members of the partnership answer these questions:

- What is success?
- Will we know it when we see it?
- How will we measure it?
- How will we be able to learn from our missteps and our failures? *(It is important for partnerships to recognize failure as a learning experience without scapegoating or blaming.)*

While developing a thoughtful strategy, some community partnerships also move more quickly on projects where all share a commitment. For example, a partnership focused on preventing youth violence might create a forum on relationships between the police and youth or help support a teen-friendly community center prior to developing a full-blown strategy.

Action

This is an exciting step for the group; it brings people together, increases people's ownership and motivation for the project, and can lead to new people wanting to be at the table. Though there is much excitement, there are still issues to address during this time.

One of the most common challenges faced during the implementation phase is discovering that while individuals representing an organization may have agreed on a set of principles or a process as their strategy, the people within their organization may not understand, agree or want to participate. Often the community partnership needs to tackle these questions.

- How can the partnership promote broad alignment with the strategy throughout the participating organizations?

It is typical to have representatives around the table who are very passionate and committed to the issues being addressed. However, don't assume each of these passionate individuals has an army behind him or her, ready to follow. Spend some time at one of the meetings talking through an outline of what needs to be discussed with each organization. Case studies provide an opportunity to brainstorm ways to respond to resistance and other barriers within an

organization. It may be helpful to offer coaching or one-on-one support to some representatives who are in particularly politicized or resistant environments.

- Is there a need for training or other forms of capacity building?

  The strategy may include new operational procedures and an inclusive consumer relations process. Not every organization may have the capacity to train its staff; how can the partnership provide assistance? One way is to have a cadre of trainers available for organizations to contact. The training design should fit people's time demands. For example, offer sessions over the lunch period or during the last work hour of the day. The organizations will vary in number of employees and funding levels, therefore the partnership needs to create an equitable process to support this diversity.

- Does the lack of buy-in illuminate a flaw in the way the community partnership makes decisions, or in the makeup of the group? If so, does the effort need to be slowed down until more stakeholders are comfortable with its direction?

  This may create great tension within the partnership. Some representatives may be upset because they have been communicating information and leading a buy-in effort with colleagues, and others have not. One of the first things to get from each member of the partnership is an explanation of the decision-making process for his or her organization. Can the person at the table make decisions without consulting the organization? If not, how long is the decision-making process?

  It may mean the process needs to slow down until everyone is on board. Some questions to ask the partnership: What is the minimum buy-in for the group to move forward? What is the degree of comfort necessary to move on? What is the higher priority—setting up a new infrastructure for this strategy to work or getting the services out to the community as soon as possible?

It is important to take the time to ensure broad ownership of the initiative. Without it, it will be difficult to sustain any successes.

Maintaining Momentum

The unfortunate reality of community partnerships around the country is that after the first flurry of activity and early successes, participation diminishes, plans are not made for financial sustainability, the energy dissipates, and much effort goes into re-energizing the partnership as a crisis—often financial—is faced.

A wide array of strategies are used to maintain momentum.

- **Develop Proactive Strategies for Sustainability.**

  The central element in all of these strategies is being proactive. Take time, well before new funding is needed, to explore the status and direction of the partnership. Develop contingency plans. Reexamine the partnership's vision. Explore whether the right partners are still at the table. Analyze funding and work to identify new or reallocated revenue streams early in the life of the partnership.

- **Deepen and Broaden the Focus.**

  Many community partnerships start with a specific focus—reducing substance abuse or addressing youth violence—and find that their work is really about a broader topic such as a youth or community development strategy. Many partnerships intentionally expand their work to move beyond their initial area of focus to develop a proactive, prevention-oriented agenda.

- **Expand the Geographical Reach.**

  Some partnerships find there are requests to expand their work to more schools or more neighborhoods.

- **Develop New or Non-Traditional Partners.**

  By expanding the partnership to encompass new members, the partnership's focus automatically expands. For example, bringing the school system to the table full of human service providers may dramatically increase opportunities to work with children and youth.

- **Develop an Institutionalization Strategy.**

  In many instances, the partnership will find it useful to take the services and embed them within mainstream institutions. (For more information, see Toolkit Number 2—Building Sustainability.)

- **Collaborate with other Partnerships.**

  Partnerships with a focused agenda, such as a school-to-work partnership—might find an array of partnerships focused on the same population of students. These might include efforts to reduce teen pregnancy, reduce substance abuse, and support volunteer service. In fact, there may be some competition and redundancy among these efforts. Some partnerships will tackle the need to build collaboration among other partnerships.

- **Develop a Graceful Exit Strategy.**

  Finally, it is important to recognize that not all partnerships need to or want to survive and thrive. By creating a proactive discussion, a partnership can dissolve on its own terms rather than waiting to run out of money.

It should be clear that the care, feeding, and stewardship of a partnership does not happen by accident. Indeed, quite the opposite. Successful partnerships spend the time necessary to make the partnership work.

3 RETHINKING ASSUMPTIONS: Stories from Communities

When facilitators or trainers want to inject a little levity into conversations about partnerships and collaboration, they often tell the hackneyed joke which starts out by asking, "Do you know the **real** definition of collaboration?" Without waiting for a response, the answer is given—"Collaboration is an unnatural act between two unconsenting adults." The joke invariably gets a laugh, because like most jokes, there is a grain of truth in the observation. Many partnerships are successful because they bring together stakeholders who never imagined collaborating with each other.

Hopefully the stories told here illuminate the way many typical assumptions in a community are turned on their head in order to build a successful partnership. Players who many would think could not have a civil conversation between them, working together. Communities, seen by many as full of needs, now understood to be rich with assets. Past conversations and attempts at collaboration, seen by many as frustrating, dead-end efforts, now seen as foundation-laying efforts for current successful partnerships.

These stories may not illustrate the perseverance of key leaders. Their willingness to work with endless optimism combined with a sense of urgency is critical to these efforts.

Finally, these stories describe two different initiation points for the partnership—bottom up and top down—to illustrate that one can start anywhere to accomplish great things.

Bethel New Life, Southside Chicago

Most stories about Bethel New Life start with stories about Mary Nelson, the charismatic founder and president of Bethel New Life. This one will too.

Mary often starts her storytelling with a picture of the neighborhood Bethel New Life serves. She can talk at length about the demographics, the history, and the projects. But the most inspirational part of the

FURTHER INFORMATION

Bethel New Life maintains an informative web site at *bethelnewlife.org.*

Case studies can be found at *www.grassroots.org* and at *www.well.com/user/bbear/bethel.html.*

1999 FACTS ABOUT BETHEL NEW LIFE

- 1999 annual budget: $8.2 million.
- Number of employees: 328
- Number of program sites: 11
- Number of volunteers involved at Bethel: 1,055
- Number of volunteer hours contributed: 12,154
- Number of residents placed in jobs: 195
- Number of additional residents trained for job readiness: 222
- Number of Health Care Career participants certified as nurse assistants: 93
- Number of new homes under construction: 19
- Number of families assisted through supportive housing services: 87
- Number served through Chicago Family Case Management: 5,617
- Number of block clubs assisted: 25

picture is when she talks about what she and her partners see when they look at the community.

Mary says that when outsiders look at her community, they see a preponderance of single mothers and all of the pathologies that implies. Mary sees many women with a wealth of care giving skills. The kind of skills one can turn into a business.

Mary says that when outsiders look at her community, they see men and youth hanging on the street corners, drinking and loitering. Mary sees individuals who would jump at a real opportunity—like fixing up houses so they can meet licensing standards for a care-giving business.

That optimism, that ultimate belief in the human spirit has propelled this faith-based initiative from a humble beginning of a two-person organization with $5,000 in 1979 to an $8.2 million operation in 1999.

Bethel New Life is a faith-based initiative, housed at Bethel Lutheran Church. Starting with the rehabilitation of one, three-unit apartment building, Bethel has at this point built or rehabilitated over 1,000 units of housing.

It also was clear early on that people who did not have jobs could not afford the housing. That led to an Employment and Training Services initiative, which has placed over 4,000 people in full-time employment.

But people could not work if they were not healthy or needed to stay home to take care of a family member. Now the organization offers a variety of healthcare and daycare services for different populations such as UMOJA Care which serves 350 frail, elderly individuals under a "one-stop shopping" umbrella.

Bethel New Life's approach to its work gives meaning to the word partnership. Unlike, some efforts, which rely upon "collaborative" bodies to guide the work of an agency, Bethel engages partners in shared ventures where shared goals drive joint activity.

Bethel's Strategic Plan demonstrate this commitment:

- Develop **partnerships** with the Board of Advisors, the Chicago Public School system, the Chicago Park District, churches, corporations, and others to accomplish community goals more effectively.
- Enhance the **quality of life** in partnership with residents through innovative and self-sustaining community initiatives that

proactively respond to community needs, effectively utilize human resources, and define a new model for community empowerment.

- Ensure greater **community participation** in Bethel's efforts and a greater community voice in local issues, decisions, and elections through information sharing and leadership development.
- Develop a **planning framework** for the creation, implementation and evaluation of Bethel's programs, projects, initiatives, and developments to ensure that all efforts are validated by the community, feasible, and mission-appropriate.
- Improve the **effectiveness and efficiency** of initiatives and operations through a comprehensive, integrated, automated system, quality assurance mechanisms, and continuous program improvement.
- Implement a plan to ensure Bethel's future **economic viability** that diversifies its financial base and increases the level of reliable, unrestricted dollars available for new initiatives and the development of existing programs.

Some of Betel's partnerships include:

- **Lake/Pulaski Joint Venture**

  An effort to develop at least 10 businesses with opportunities for at least 10 percent local ownership, to increase ridership on the Green Line, to create over 100 new jobs in the area, and to contribute to building an attractive commercial area.

- **Goldblatt Community Plan**

  A partnership with the Chicago Public School system, the Chicago Park District, American National Bank, and Argonne National Laboratory to create new parks, safer streets, and new housing.

- **Focused Area Development**

  Development of three sites in partnership with various institutions—Parkside (Partnership for the American Dream), Keystone (Keystone Baptist Church) and K Town (Bethel Lutheran Church/ Tilton School).

It is important to note that Bethel's work is planned and guided through a continuous engagement process with the community. Agencies do not run the show.

For example, the process to build the application for an Empowerment Zone held a series of meetings involving 30–50 people each to

generate the framework for the effort. A writing team of partnering organizations moved the work forward.

Not every community will have a Bethel New Life, but every community has an institution that can begin to see what is possible and partner their way there.

Boston Strategy to Prevent Youth Violence

FURTHER INFORMATION

A detailed case study can be found in *Promising Strategies to Reduce Gun Violence* which is available for free on the OJJDP web site.

Boston's effort to reduce youth violence is among the most well-known and well-reported success stories in the juvenile justice arena. As this nationally recognized initiative moved forward, youth homicides literally stopped for over a year.

Rather than detail the step-by-step efforts better described elsewhere, this story seeks to illuminate under-reported aspects of the work that may be among the keys to success.

Collaboration among the Collaboratives

Boston's efforts included Operation Ceasefire (a gang violence abatement strategy), Boston Gun Project (a gun suppression and interdiction strategy) and Operation Night Light (a police/probation partnership) plus an expanded set of intervention and prevention programs including the Boston Community Centers' Streetworkers Program, the Youth Services Providers Network, and the Alternatives to Incarceration Network, among others. In addition there were hundreds of neighborhood-based partnerships initiated as Boston was reforming its neighborhood policing initiatives.

Unfortunately in many communities, each of these efforts work in isolation, knowing of each other but not developing strategic operating linkages. In Boston, these initiatives tended to feed, support, and resource each other in their work. And, rather than view each other as competitors—each vying for limited dollars—there was a sense of the greater spirit that mitigated the "turfiness" often found in these settings.

One of the first steps for developing a partnership in your community should be a census of related partnerships and collaboratives to understand existing efforts, develop relationships, and explore joint efforts.

Change within the Organization

As the various initiatives took hold, the Boston Police Department did not stand still.

- More than 400 participants (half police and half other stakeholders) went through training and planning programs.
- The Police Department published a *Citywide Strategic Plan*, which included a series of operational changes, incorporated prevention and problem solving approaches at every level, and decentralized the department.
- The Boston Police Department worked with the Kennedy School of Government to collect, analyze and synthesize multiple data sources on gangs, youth homicides, and relationships among gangs to drive intervention strategies.

Many partnerships led by large government agencies tend to operate at the margins of the agency's work, having little influence on day-to-day agency operations. Just the opposite is needed for an effective strategy. As our definition suggests—A community partnership is a group of community leaders who use a collaborative and inclusive strategy to establish shared goals and agree to use their personal and institutional power to achieve them—large agencies must leverage their internal resources on behalf of the shared goal if true success is to be achieved.

When the city's homicide rate skyrocketed in 1990, the mayor sought the help of streetworkers in the hope that their non-traditional outreach approaches could help reduce crime. For example, the streetworkers played an important role in Operation Ceasefire, personally inviting gang members to meetings with Federal, State, and local law enforcement agencies.[1]

Connecting with Frontline Workers and their Personal Power

All too often, leaders of a partnership regularly sit in meetings talking among themselves about the strategy, funding, personnel, and other "policy" issues, not connecting with the frontline personnel who are doing the work. In the worst case, frontline personnel are not even aware of the initiative. In many cases, frontline personnel receive a briefing or a memo. In Boston's case, initiative leaders recognized that streetworkers—who probably did not trust many of the institutional leaders as far as they could throw them—were the persons with personal relationships with gang members. Here the partnership was extended to include these frontline personnel in

[1] *Promising Strategies to Reduce Gun Violence.* Washington, DC: Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, US Department of Justice, 1999, p. 31.

some of the most critical work of the initiative, getting gang members to attend sessions where the new approaches and policies could be detailed. By effectively combining personal and institutional power Boston was able mobilize and make a difference.

Boston and Bethel's experiences offer several significant guideposts to those initiating partnerships. First, leaders in these efforts always have their eye on the prize; they understand the key goals for their initiative and work on them with a vengeance. Second, both initiatives developed strategies based on a comprehensive systems analysis so that they know about the other partnerships, know who funds what, and they know who has the personal and institutional power to contribute to the greater good. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, leaders in these initiatives have faith—often despite past experiences—in other individuals and institutions. Faith, that ultimately creates robust, inclusive, collaborative, and productive partnerships.

4 RESOURCES FOR COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Assessing and Growing Your Community Partnership

Building and maintaining effective community partnerships requires dedicated time and ongoing attention to the collaborative process. This checklist will help you understand where your partnership is thriving and where it may need attention. It can also be used with your partners so they may focus on, assess, and improve the quality of their collaborative efforts.

Assessing Your Community Partnership

1. Our partnership has developed a shared vision and a set of shared goals.

   Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Agree

   If you disagree, say why: _____
   _____
   _____

2. Our partnership has successfully engaged a broad base of partners from a range of individuals and organizations representing all the key stakeholders.

   Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Agree

   If you disagree, say why: _____
   _____
   _____

3. Our partnership has the right "mix" of partners so that we our representative, inclusive, and effective.

   Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Agree

   If you disagree, say why: _____
   _____
   _____

4. Families and consumers are involved in our community partnership in a meaningful way.

   Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Agree

   If you disagree, say why: _____
   _____
   _____

Adapted from Strengthening Partnerships: Community School Assessment Checklist. Institute for Educational Leadership and The Finance Project. 2000.

5. If we are a place-based partnership, our community partnership regularly engages residents and neighborhood leaders in a meaningful way.

Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Agree

If you disagree, say why: _____
_____
_____

6. Our partnership has established a clear organizational structure. Our partnership has agreed upon the roles that individual partners will play, and ensured that all partners understand and accept the responsibilities of those roles.

Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Agree

If you disagree, say why: _____
_____
_____

7. All partners involved in our community partnership have an understanding of who the other partners are, what organizations they come from, and what those organizations do.

Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Agree

If you disagree, say why: _____
_____
_____

8. Our community partnership regularly communicates with all partners to keep them informed about its work.

Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Agree

If you disagree, say why: _____
_____
_____

9. Our partnership engages in activities to create awareness about and increase support for the work of the partnership.

Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Agree

If you disagree, say why: _____
_____
_____

10. Our community partnership has effective meetings and is able to work through tough issues.

Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Agree

If you disagree, say why: _____
_____
_____

11. Every partner has a clear understanding of how we make decisions and resolve conflict.

Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Agree

If you disagree, say why: _____
_____
_____

12. Our community partnership has a clear plan of action.

Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Agree

If you disagree, say why: _____
_____
_____

13. Our partnership is effectively moving on that plan of action.

Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Agree

If you disagree, say why: _____
_____
_____

14. Our community partnership has clear measures of success and we are measuring our progress toward success.

Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Agree

If you disagree, say why: _____
_____
_____

15. Our partnership has identified and mobilized resources (financial and other) from partner organizations and other entities throughout the community.

Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Agree

If you disagree, say why: _____
_____
_____

Growing Your Community Partnership

1. Our community partnership regularly renews its vision, goals, and strategic plan.

   Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Agree

   If you disagree, say why: _____
   _____
   _____

2. Our community partnership has proactively developed strategies for sustainability.

   Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Agree

   If you disagree, say why: _____
   _____
   _____

3. Our community partnership is moving beyond its initial focus to become more comprehensive and holistic.

   Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Agree

   If you disagree, say why: _____
   _____
   _____

4. Our community partnership is engaging new partners in its work.

   Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Agree

   If you disagree, say why: _____
   _____
   _____

5. The institutional partners in our community partnership are becoming more engaged and aligned with the work of the partnership.

   Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Agree

   If you disagree, say why: _____
   _____
   _____

6. Our community partnership has effective alliances with other partnerships and we work collectively to identify areas of collaboration and work toward synergy.

   Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Agree

   If you disagree, say why: _____
   _____
   _____

Resources on the Web

CommunityWorks Toolbox

http://www.toolbox.org/

The CommunityWorks Toolbox offers concrete ideas and guidelines for starting a group in your neighborhood, building interest in a volunteer project, or finding other people who are thinking about the future of your community. The CommunityWorks Toolbox is maintained by the Benton Foundation.

Community Tool Box

http://ctb.lsi.ukans.edu/

This site offers perhaps the most extensive set of tools. There are over 3,000 downloadable pages of specific, skill-building information on over 150 community topics.

Connect for Kids

http://www.connectforkids.org

This Benton Foundation site offers a wealth of information including up-to-date news releases. You can also subscribe to a weekly email with tools and news at this site.

Join Together

http://www.jointogether.org

This site includes up-to-the-minute news as well as a wide range of resources for efforts to reduce substance abuse and gun violence. It is based at the Boston University School of Public Health. Join Together also offers a daily and weekly email news service.

Building Healthier Communities

http://www.bhconline.org/

Building Healthier Communities is primarily a link site, offering connections to a wide array of organizations focused on healthier communities.

Community Building Resource Exchange

http://www.commbuild.org/

The Community Building Resource Exchange provides a broad array of resources and information about innovative community building efforts to revitalize poor neighborhoods and improve the life circumstances of residents and their families. This web site is a project of the Aspen Institute Roundtable on Comprehensive Community Initiatives for Children and Families.

Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention

http://ojjdp.ncjrs.org/

The OJJDP site offers a wide range of resources including case studies, handbooks, information on funding, and other resources.

Written Resources

Blank, Martin and Jackie Danzberger. *Creating and Nurturing Collaboration in Communities: Stories from the Collaborative Leadership Development Program.* 1996.

The Institute for Educational Leadership has worked with leaders in five cities (Flint, Michigan; Fort Worth, Texas; Kansas City, Missouri; and South Tucson, Arizona) to increase capacity of leaders to work together to improve results for children and families. This monograph provides readers a walk through of the collaborative process in each city. There are lessons shared, which provide benchmarks against the backdrop of each city's timeline.

Call 202-822-8405 to order a copy.

Chang, Hedy Nai-Lin and Denise De La Rosa Salazar. *Drawing Strength from Diversity: Effective Services for Children, Youth and Families.* San Francisco: California Tomorrow. 1994.

This monograph offers readers a basic overview of the connection between issues of racism, language and culture, and efforts to reform and improve services to children and families. Its central premise is that reform will not be successful unless attention to diversity is paid throughout all aspects of the reform effort. The monograph provides examples of how issues of diversity emerge in terms of community assessment, innovations in service delivery, community governance, evaluation and financing.

To order, call California Tomorrow, 415-441-7631.

Chrislip, David and Carl Larsen. *Collaborative Leadership: How Citizens and Civic Leaders Can Make a Difference.* San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 1994.

An insightful book that helps community leaders learn how to collaborate more effectively with citizens. Draws from numerous case studies.

Order from any bookstore.

Johnson, Kathryn, Wynne Grossman, and Anne Cassidy. *Collaborating to Improve Community Health: Workbook and Guide to Best Practices in Creating Healthier Communities and Populations.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1996.

Many consultants and practitioners came together for this project to share experiences and accomplishments of community work in over fifty partnerships across North America. This book also includes worksheets, guidelines, overhead slides, and case studies to assist any community creating a collaborative plan of action.

Kingsley, G. Thomas., Joseph B. McNeely, and James O. Gibson. *Community Building Coming of Age*. The Development Training Institute, Inc. and The Urban Institute.

This book showcases five notable community-based initiatives, provides a historical context of community building, and illuminates current themes and trends. One of the consistent threads of the book is its emphasis on changing institutional barriers and racism.

Can be downloaded from the website of the National Community Building Network at *www.ncbn.org.*

Kretzman, John and John McNight. *Building Communities From the Inside Out.* Evanston, IL: Center For Urban Affairs and Policy Research, 1993.

This publication looks at the basic building blocks of an asset-based approach to community development. This is an excellent resource for shifting people from problem/deficit-oriented approaches to strengths or asset based strategies.

To order call the Center for Urban Affairs and Policy Research at 708-491-3518 or 1-800-397-2282.

Melaville, Atelia and Martin J. Blank. *Together We Can: A Guide for Crafting a Profamily System of Education and Human Services.* Washington, DC: US Department of Education and US Department of Health and Human Services, 1993.

Presents a comprehensive framework of the stages and milestones of a collaborative approach to systems reform. It has been widely disseminated and used as a tool for changing the way systems are organized to support children, youth, and families.

U.S. Government Printing Office. April 1993. Superintendent of Documents, P.O. Box 371954, Pittsburgh, PA 15250-7954. (For free copies call: 202-512-1800, #1)

The National Assembly of National Voluntary Health and Social Welfare Organizations. *The New Community Collaboration Manual.* Bethesda, MD: Rock Creek Publishing, 1997.

This evolving manual provides step-by-step guidelines for early formation of a collaborative and discusses pitfalls and barriers. It also includes chapters on the role of media, using information technology and holding a community summit.

To order, call 202-347-2080.

Annie E. Casey Foundation. *The Path of Most Resistance: Reflections on Lessons Learned.* Baltimore, MD: The Annie E. Casey Foundation.

In 1988, The Annie E. Casey Foundation launched New Futures, a five-year initiative aimed at preparing disadvantaged urban youth for successful lives as adults. The monograph is based on the insight of Foundation staff's role of managing and funding an ambitious, comprehensive reform initiative.

A free copy of this monograph can be obtained by calling 410-547-6600.

Harwood Group. *Planned Serendipity.* Charlottesville, VA: Pew Partnership for Civic Change.

The Harwood Group interviewed people from nine communities participating in the Pew Partnership. The community leaders provided several helpful lessons and tips including different ways to measure success, questions regarding diversity before forming a collaboration, norms for collaboratives to focus on establishing, and an assessment of relationships within the larger community.

To order, call 804-971-2073 or email *mail@pew-partnership.org.*

Schorr, Lisbeth B. *Common Purpose: Strengthening Families and Neighborhoods to Rebuild America.* New York: Anchor Books, 1997.

This may be the most comprehensive book on community-based efforts to improve the well being of children and families. Includes numerous case studies that highlight different approaches to reform and change.

Order from any bookstore.

Stone, Rebecca and Benjamin Butler. *Core Issues in Comprehensive Community-Building Initiatives: Exploring Race and Power.* Chicago, IL: Chapin Hall Center for Children.

Excellent book that integrates lessons learned and also "holds the mirror up close" to the impact of power and race on community building initiatives from the perspective of different stakeholders: funders, evaluators, initiative directors, technical assistance providers, residents, and initiative managers.

To order, call Chapin Hall at 773-256-5213.

Winer, Michael and Karen Ray. *Collaboration Handbook: Creating, Sustaining, and Enjoying the Journey.* St. Paul, MN: Amherst H. Wilder Foundation, 1994.

A comprehensive and affirming step-by-step guide to collaboration, which includes documentation forms, worksheets and handouts.

To order, call 1-800-274-6024.

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