Best Practices in Place-Based Approach

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LIVE UNITED

TABLE OF CONTENTS

SETTING THE CONTEXT

United Way of Olmsted County (UWOC) knows its donors, volunteers, advocates, and partners support research-based strategies that can help our community close achievement gaps. This summary, based on national research and local context, is designed to highlight best practices and practical considerations in implementing a place-based initiative through community partnerships and grantmaking – in short, *how* the place-based approach can be best implemented in Olmsted County. This paper is intended to serve as background and research for the purpose of informing decision-making. It does not necessarily constitute any recommended course of action. It is also intended to be used as a resource in the greater community of Olmsted County, and is offered up to interested parties to read, redistribute, and modify for their own purposes.

For UWOC purposes, this paper is meant to inform the implementation of our place-based funding approach and to that end, we are working within *four* parameters:

- Values include: equitable, inclusive, and data-driven practices
- Success of a project is determined by achieving "better-off" performance measures indicating a change in skills, attitude, behavior, or circumstance
- UWOC is likely to invest in one place-based initiative at the outset, as we work to fine-tune our role

INTRO

We know that place matters: research and experience shows that families and students do better when they live in strong communities ("Center for the Study of Social Policy," 2017). Strong communities are marked by the opportunities they afford their residents – including economic mobility, employment security, and self-advocacy. Yet challenges such as poverty, unemployment, housing instability, and education levels tend to concentrate in areas negatively impacted by a history of disinvestment and require intentional, location-specific efforts in order to be adequately addressed (Taylor, Brown, Wechsler, & Bochnovic, 2014). Place-based approaches allow for targeted investments in neighborhoods experiencing concentrated need, ensuring that all neighborhoods become the kinds of places that allow children and families to reach their full potential.

Our own community is divided geographically by race and income, with low-income residences and families clustered in neighborhoods in the Southeast and Northwest parts of Rochester. These areas of town overlap significantly where the plurality is nonwhite, resulting in neighborhoods that are significantly poorer and less white than others. With a public school system built primarily around neighborhood schools, differences across schools in academic outcomes such as graduation rates, test scores, and discipline records are, in large part, equivalent to differences across neighborhoods, race, and income (for a full exposition on predictors at the neighborhood level, please reference UWOC document "Mapping Predictors of Academic Outcomes onto Rochester, MN," available upon request.

A place-based approach has the potential to lead to improved outcomes for children and their families by reducing barriers to access, addressing barriers that are shared by residents of a given neighborhood, providing services in a concentrated way to those hardest to reach, and increasing social capital of a given neighborhood. Place-based approaches also have a number of communication and resource development advantages which can lead to increased support for the work. These advantages include the ability to demonstrate program impact, the ability to demonstrate that the program makes change 'in-place' rather than via gentrification or displacement, and the program's ability to target a priority population. For examples and further explanation of the benefits of using a place-based approach to enacting community change, please reference UWOC document "The Case for a Place-Based Approach to Community Change."

This paper is meant to explore some best practices, commonalities, and models of place-based approaches from around in the country. It draws heavily on the work done in the Northside Achievement Zone, the Harlem Children's Zone, and the Building Neighborhood Capacity Program.

PLACE-BASED APPRACH AND COLLECTIVE IMPACT

Place-based work often overlaps heavily both in form and practice with collective impact efforts. A place-based approach may be a small component of a collective impact effort, or may itself be considered a form of collective impact if all five key elements are present (Kania & Kramer, 2011):

1. All participants have a common agenda for change including a shared understanding of the problem and a joint approach to solving it through agreed upon actions.
2. Collecting data and measuring results consistently across all participants ensures shared measurement for alignment and accountability.
3. A plan of action that outlines and coordinates mutually reinforcing activities for each participant.
4. Open and continuous communication across the many players to build trust, assure mutual objectives, and create common motivation.
5. A backbone organization(s) with staff and specific set of skills to serve the entire initiative and coordinate participating organizations and agencies.

The determination of whether or not to consider a place-based effort to be a form of collective impact may be a matter of scale, linguistic preference, or local conditions. In Rochester, UWOC anticipates that the number of children and families served in a place-based approach will not approach the size and scope of something more commonly labelled collective impact. In terms of linguistic preference, it removes ambiguity to reserve *collective impact* to refer to our Cradle-to-Career, CHIP, and Community Schools work and to reserve *place-based approach* to refer to our neighborhood-based work. Lastly, the existence of the Rochester Cradle-to-Career effort suggests that UWOC's place-based work (which will work to improve educational outcomes for children) will both intersect and be influenced by the larger community conversation. However, this overlap is anticipated to be incidental rather than structural, and the two efforts should be viewed as distinct branches of United Way work in the community.

For these reasons, we will maintain precision of language and use the phrases 'place-based' and 'neighborhood-based'

ORGANIZATIONS AND ROLES IN THE PLACE-BASED APPROACH

United Way will be seeking what we term a '**neighborhood services coordinator**.' This is an organization rather than a specific individual, but the work may be allocated to a designated staff person within the organization who may be referred to as the **site director**.

This organization will be responsible for implementing a planning period (consisting largely of needs assessments and community engagement activity), developing solutions to local-level barriers, inviting partners into the work to implement solutions, and developing partnership and data collection norms amongst partners. The neighborhood services coordinator will work in close conjunction with United Way in pursuit of these goals. The organization, in order to receive funding, must hold non-profit status or work with a qualified fiscal agent. This does not indicate that potential applicants be restricted to organizations in the human and social services; faith-based organizations, government entities, advocacy groups, and affiliation groups may also be considered.

Services will be provided by a number of agencies identified as **service providers**. Service providers address key barriers experienced in the neighborhood, and co-locate their services in a location easily accessible to residents of the neighborhood. They assist the neighborhood services coordinator by collecting participant-level data.

United Way views its role as a **lead agency,** the agency which developed the initial passion or vision for the work and whose name is associated with the work. United Way may also provide functions and skills that are not found in other partner agencies or community residents. United Way will also be serving as a funder to the effort.

Place-based work brings together the work of a number of different types of partners:

> **Cross-sector partners** come from the public, faith, or for-profit realms.
>
> **Anchors** are organizations active in the neighborhood before place-based work is started, and who have strong pre-existing relationships with neighborhood residents.

Learning While Doing projects are small-scale projects undertaken at the beginning of a place-based effort. The aim is to produce early, tangible benefits that contribute to the neighborhood's longer-term desired result. This term is taken from the Building Neighborhood Capacity Program.

A Continuum of Solutions refers to the comprehensive set of mutually-reinforcing interventions developed and implemented in a place-based

initiative. A full continuum includes elements of policy and systems change, programmatic interventions, are evidence-based and data driven, are linked and integrated, and include education, family, and community supports. This term is taken from the federal Promise Neighborhoods Program.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF A SUCCESSFUL LEAD AGENCY OR FUNDER

In order to maintain precision of language, United Way of Olmsted County is considered the 'lead agency' in our place-based work –the agency which develops the initial passion or vision for the work, and whose name is associated with the work. This agency provides oversight and serves as the central point for program development. The following is a summary of some best practices, areas of emphasis, and advice that has been derived from a number of case studies and lessons learned. These learnings are aimed at organizations that act as lead agencies, community organizers, and/or funders. In place-based work, UWOC will be acting in an analogous role.

Providing Clarity

Outside of the practical considerations of capacity and resources, one of the most important components of a funder's role in place-based work is to bring clarity to the effort as a whole. Clarity starts internally: taking the time to articulate the funder's own motivations and expectations regarding the initiative creates the foundation necessary for a shared framework around values, barriers, and strategies (Trent & Chavis, 2009).

A good place to start in generating clarity is to create a strong and clear theory of change based on evidence and research. The theory of change should identify explicit points of entrance, activities, and outcomes. When this theory of change is created early in the process, the resulting document can serve to encourage the funder to identify its position within the work. The document can also serve to communicate that position to stakeholders and potential partners during the planning, development, and implementation phases. The theory of change will necessarily evolve as community input is sought and reflected upon, but thoughtful front-end work can be advantageous in the long run (Juarez and Associates and Harder + Company, 2011).

Once a funder has reached internal clarity, staff should strive to clarify how their expectations, assumptions, and interests can be communicated to each group of stakeholders in the project, and then communicate them in a clear and consistent manner. This does not mean dictating terms and requirements unilaterally or inflexibly, but being explicit about expectations, forthcoming with information and guidance, and prepared to negotiate with clarity and specificity the details of funding, governance, programmatic scope, outcome expectations, benchmarks of progress, and appropriate measures of success. Roles, responsibilities, lines of accountability, and outcome expectations and indicators need to be defined and agreed upon among funders, intermediaries, and initiative participants (Chaskin, 2000).

Especially important to reach clarity on are the various roles and responsibilities of each party involved in the work. Because funders are able

to build the structure of the work from the ground up, they are able to draft their initial preferences and constraints before introducing the work to community partners. Once the framework (along with the funder-determined constraints and structure) has been introduced to partners, modifications can be made together as needed changes become apparent from either party's perspective (Juarez and Associates and Harder + Company, 2011).

It is especially important to specify clearly what is meant by terms like "community ownership" and "resident driven." Defining these terms early in the work can help ensure that partners' perspectives align with that of the funder, therefore decreasing the number of conflicts that arise due to misunderstanding of what ownership "looks like." For example, ownership may refer to residents who are paid staff positions and stipends to take on service provider roles (Ahsan, 2008) *or* it may refer to financial co-investment (Jacobs Center for Neighborhood Innovation, 2010), *or* any number of alternative manifestations. How these terms are defined can determine how the neighborhood services coordinator provides service, which in turn impacts how residents interact and engage in the work (David, 2008). When done well, a clear vision for what community ownership means and looks like can counter the caretaker culture that dominates many agencies in the human services (Traynor, 2002).

Understanding the Work at Hand

Funders are often removed from interacting directly with clients, but have a 'bird's eye view' of community resources, networks, and social issues. Being removed from the ins-and-outs of running daily programming means that funders often have staff time to dedicate to research, driving collaborative work, and facilitating strategic planning. Rather than radically changing the way of work for the funder and attempting to implement programming and services, it makes sense to leverage staff resources in the pursuit of learning and co-learning.

The foundational learning that should occur in place-based work is to build a solid understanding of the problem and what is needed to solve it (Trent & Chavis, 2009). This requires the funder to have an ongoing commitment to research, literature review, localizing data, and continuous improvement processes. It involves co-learning with all stakeholders: the neighborhood services coordinator, service providers, and neighborhood residents. The learnings of the funder and other stakeholders drives the work, allowing the generation and testing of new ideas and the further building and sharing of knowledge (Auspos, Brown, Kubisch, & Sutton, 2009).

While the funder's initial understanding of the work will inform the structure and process, both are malleable as new learnings arise and inform the

funder's organizational perspective. As new information comes in – such as uncovering previously invisible unmet needs and gaps, emergent barriers, or turnover within the neighborhood or key service providers – the funder can facilitate the process of interpreting and acting on the new information. The funder is also best able to stay abreast of current research and field practices and incorporate this information into the work. By doing so, the funder is able to 'stack the odds in favor of success' (Trent & Chavis, 2009) from initial selection of the social issue (or area) to be addressed, to the selection of the neighborhood and neighborhood services coordinator, to interpreting needs assessments, to designing the structures and processes which move the work forward, to communicating impact and results out to the wider community. While few funders or lead agencies can perform all these roles well with their current staff and resources, it is important that the funder intentionally cultivates the capacity to fulfill whatever role(s) it takes on (Kubisch, Auspos, Brown, & Dewar, 2010).

Maintaining Consistency

As in more traditional grant making, the funder in a place-based approach develops the direction, expectations, and processes associated with the work. Funders who provide consistent framing, messaging, and processes to their grantees and collaborative partners create a more predictable working environment for the stakeholders involved. Keeping these expectations consistent through time encourages trust to grow between the funder and grantee.

By nature, however, place-based work is responsive to community conditions and learnings that surface through the work. This does not mean that consistency cannot be attained. Rather, it implies that consistency is best found in messaging, values, and process rather than in performance measures or the composition of the work's programmatic "portfolio". As the need for refinements in outcome expectations or funding patterns arise, these changes should be addressed explicitly and their implications collectively negotiated by the diverse stakeholders involved in the work (Chaskin, 2000). It falls upon the funder to provide clear and consistent messaging that creates a sense of continuity to the work despite programmatic and partnership shifts through time.

To the extent that United Way of Olmsted County will be acting as a lead agency in addition to acting as a funder, special consideration should be given to the ways in which these two roles interact and intersect. In the lead agency role, UWOC will be more heavily involved in the planning and implementation of the work than they would if they were acting strictly as a funder. As a funder, they will be granting money to plan and implement work in which staff are personally engaged: possibly as conveners, technical support, or process experts. This overlap is a point of potential conflict, but

one which can properly negotiated if addressed in the initial stages of the work. This overlap also has the potential to provide a level of consistency to the work which may otherwise be difficult to achieve in a project which brings together many various stakeholders. Establishing a clear framework, vision, and core set of values that can carry the work forward is important early-stage work which has the potential to make or break the sense of consistency of the entire project.

It typically takes a funder up to two years to evolve to the point it has the capacity to take on place-based strategy, and often takes a few more to reach substantial program alignment (Fiester, 2011). A common reason community initiatives are undermined is that staff and board expectations fail to align regarding the pace of change or how progress (or even high-level results) are to be measured (Brown & Fiester, 2007).Given predictable board and staff changes over the life of a long-term initiative, this alignment needs regular attention. Without it, the project can quickly lose its sense of continuity. Expectations and process may become inconsistent, and both trust and sense of direction may begin to break down between stakeholders.

Becoming a Changemaker

Acting as a lead agency in a place-based approach will require UWOC to grow into the role of community changemaker. A shift has taken UWOC away from acting as a pass-through organization, and as capacity in collective impact has grown, changes have been made to the impact model to become more person-focused. Until now, many of United Way's changemaking strengths remained nascent. The ground work has been laid for these strengths to grow: engaging Olmsted County residents in community conversations, adopting the Harwood model and Results-Based Accountability framework, engaging in Community Schools work, and supporting the Cradle-to-Career effort in Rochester.

In coming months, United Way will continue to identify and clarify its role as lead agency and funder in its place-based work. This will no doubt be an iterative process, given that the nature of the work is different in many ways from any component of previous investments. But it is essential that the core of this role remain consistent throughout the work, and that UWOC learn to utilize its full range of assets – knowledge, networks, credibility and political capital, as well as financial resources – to advance its place-based goals (Brown, 2012).

There are three main competencies that United Way can further develop to become an effective changemaker: sharing accountability for learning and results; respectfully engaging issues of race, class, and culture; and forging policy-level and systems change. The fourth key competency may lie either with United Way in the role of lead agency or with the neighborhood services

coordinator, but is most likely shared between the two of them: the ability to effectively engage community residents in the work. The fact that this fourth competency is both shared *and is the crux of the work* indicates that clarifying this role and success within it should receive considerable staff attention and effort.

Shared Accountability for Learning and Results

An effective changemaker is jointly accountable for program results, sharing this responsibility with grantees and partners. Because the responsibility is shared, strategy development and continuous improvement efforts will often take place in collaborative settings. An effective way to accomplish these activities is by creating a learning environment that permeates all levels of the work, gathering together with stakeholders in various combinations throughout the year to review results, identify and implement necessary modifications, and glean further input from community residents. Some of this work can take place in continuous processes (such as upon intake), at certain 'snapshot' periods (such as year-end reporting), or in more rapid-cycle feedback loops. The processes to interpret and react to findings may be structured differently depending on the stakeholders involved and the level at which modifications may be made - whether it is at the individual, program, or whole-project. Infused throughout the learning component of the work is the approach of the lead agency. A lead agency that can model effective learning practices – listening well, communicating respect, and engaging fully as a learner—contributes significantly to an initiative's potential to do this more widely. Funders are typically key actors in place-based initiatives so learning collaboratively with grantees and partners and assuming shared responsibility for results is critical (Juarez and Associates and Harder + Company, 2011).

Respectfully Engaging Issues of Race, Class, and Culture

Because poverty, race, and place are linked by structural, institutional, and historical forces, funders and lead agencies should develop an awareness and competency with these issues before engaging residents at the neighborhood level. This can involve staff training on intercultural development, the creation of core organization values, and education on local historical, demographic, and political forces. During the initial phase of the work, the ability of the lead agency to address issues of race, class, and culture satisfactorily will determine the extent to which its relationship with the community will be able to mature. Many lead agencies frame the lead agency/resident relationship as one of mutual respect (Brown, Butler, & Hamilton, 2001). Respect is about being able to listen and learn, and convey a

commitment to honest exchange. It is about the humility with which an outsider approaches a community with a genuine desire to learn. It is also about honoring and supporting residents' competence as leaders (Omowale Satterwhite & Teng, 2007).

While UWOC must do the work of engaging issues of race, class, and culture at the program level, it may be the neighborhood services coordinator involved in the bulk of daily interactions with neighborhood residents. As such, the funding review process for the place-based approach should weigh this competency heavily when considering applicants for the neighborhood services coordinator position. More exposition on this subject will be included in the section of this paper titled "Key Characteristics Sought in a Neighborhood Services Coordinator."

Forging Policy-Level and Systems Change

Most place-based work incorporates some degree of policy-level and systems change. This is done in order to create sustainable change for local residents, even for those not directly reached by human and social service providers. Often, systems changes are scalable and replicable, allowing cross-site learning, duplication, and expansion of the service zone as necessary ("NAZ Promise Neighborhood Implementation Grant Application," 2011).

The ability to influence and lead systems-level conversation is a competency which United Way of Olmsted County has been developing in recent years – particularly with our Community Schools and Cradle-to-Career work. Both of these efforts resemble current systems-level work in well-established place-based efforts such the Northside Achievement Zone, Harlem Children's Zone, or the Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative. A distinguishing feature of place-based work in Olmsted County is that it will be, at least initially, significantly smaller in scale, so its systems-level work will likely not be at the level of the school district, county, or city. Instead, systems-level work is more likely to be at the level of an individual school, neighborhood association, or affiliation group.

Due to United Way's position in the community and history of engaging in systems-level collaboration, this is a competency which is likely to sit mostly with United Way itself. However, any organization that acts as the neighborhood services coordinator must be willing and able to support this work.

Additionally, it would be advisable to work closely with community anchors – whether or not they work as or host the neighborhood services coordinator - to ensure that systems work is encouraged by or

at least accepted by them. As anchors have pre-existing relationships with community members, they have the ability to reach and mobilize community members - that is the reason to leverage those relationships at the beginning of place-based work. But it can also be a liability if the community anchor determines there is a need to align residents *against* work being done by the lead agency and/or the neighborhood services provider.

The Ability to Effectively Engage Community Residents in the Work

The last core competency of effective changemakers that will be discussed in this paper is the ability to effectively engage residents. In recent years, this competency is being increasingly taken up by funders and lead agencies in both traditional funding formats and collaborative work for multiple reasons – undoing historical inequities of voice and power, increasing program efficiency by providing services with authentic demand, and appealing to supporters who prefer grassroots work over more institutional interventions being just a few.

An agency that does not often engage directly with clients and who does not have a pre-existing neighborhood-level presence is likely to fall into the trap of relying on community gatekeepers whose voices and opinions are most easily heard by outsiders (Kubisch et al., 2010). Similarly, any agency that does not have grass roots may have to make special efforts to engage the views and participation of less visible, less connected residents and make an intentional effort to ensure that organizational leadership does not speak for residents (Fiester, 2011).

In order to avoid these complications, a clear preference could be made to have neighborhood residents or local grassroots organizations act as the neighborhood services coordinator and to have United Way step back from this component of the work – providing technical and logistical assistance rather than facilitating conversations or leading community events. However, not every neighborhood has such an applicant – in fact, most do not. Additionally, different engagement strategies are usually needed to reach different segments of the community (Ahsan, 2008). Unless the neighborhood is particularly homogenous, even a home-grown neighborhood services coordinator may encounter the same troubles a funder would in terms of engaging the broader community, rather than just those easiest to reach.

Accountability

Place-based work brings together the individual efforts of a number of partners – lead agency staff, grantees, collaboration partners, and residents – in the pursuit of a single high-level result. The work of each partner influences the others, and poor performers from any of the stakeholder groups has the potential to drag down the success of everyone involved. Funders should be prepared to hold grantees and their own staff accountable for poor performance (Trent & Chavis, 2009). This is different than traditional grantmaking, in which joint accountability is rare or in many funders' practices, nonexistent.

A funder must be prepared to take responsibility for results as well as create the internal structures that promote accountability and collaboration (Greeley & Greeley, 2011). Community change is not the sole responsibility of the people who receive the funder's resources but also of the funder's staff and leadership (Fiester, 2011). The fact that such a stance puts the funder's reputation at stake in a very public way should reinforce, not deter, its commitment to learning.

Allowing for Time

Community-driven change consistently takes longer than stakeholders anticipate or desire. The work is unlikely to fit neatly into predetermined grant periods of a certain number of months or years – in fact, high-level results are not typically seen for the better part of a decade. In a typical funder-grantee relationship, the pressure to generate visible results can result in partners feeling that they do not have the luxury of time to build the capacity needed to properly undertake the work. This can result in communities or grantees appearing to want the funder to tell them what to do or do it themselves (Brown, Chaskin, Hamilton, & Richman, 2003). While this may result in tasks being completed faster, it prevents the community from growing capacity. In order to do so, they must be given the time and resources for active learning to take place and be integrated into the work. A funder involved in place-based work should determine when investments in developing capacity make sense and provide the needed time and resources.

In order to set the stage for capacity-building in the neighborhood, the funder must allow time at the outset of the work to build relationships between neighborhoods and external partners, as well as deepen their understanding of the salient forces in the neighborhood. The process of learning about each stakeholder's aspirations, resources, limitations, and realities takes time and care. This process means reviewing the community's social and demographic data, getting to know its history and culture, its social and political dynamics, and its leadership and institutional strengths (Brown et al., 2003). It also means there will be a stage during

the work that very little is produced in terms of tangible results, and the funder, neighborhood services coordinator, and residents must find a way to balance the need for residents to feel that they are getting something out of the process with the need to *not do anything* until the trust and relationships are established that are so crucial to success.

Another factor that can slow paced-base work is the involvement (or employment) of residents in driving the work. While there are clear benefits to hiring a resident to dedicate their time to the work, that person may need extra time and coaching to be successful in his or her role. Residents are not the only people who need to build capacity to achieve results. Some organizational leaders also need new skills to work more effectively with residents, both within the neighborhood services coordinator and the funder itself. It's important to have an organization that serves as a consistent convener and supporter of resident action—for instance, by helping to create a resident leadership group or securing funds for projects. However, the organization must have capacity to partner with residents (Brown & Fiester, 2014).

KEY CHARACTERISTICS SOUGHT IN A NEIGHBORHOOD SERVICES COORDINATOR

The neighborhood services coordinator works directly with the majority of the stakeholders in place-based work. They mobilize neighborhood residents, relay learnings about community need to service providers, coordinate the work of service providers in the neighborhood, and communicate results and learnings back to the lead agency. This role is complex, varies from project to project, and depends largely on both the lead agency's strengths and preferences as well as the pre-existing resources, networks, and organizations present in the neighborhood. Outside of practical considerations like data collection and facilitating meetings, the key role of a neighborhood services coordinator is that it fills the gaps left by other stakeholders. Before proposals are developed by prospective neighborhood service coordinators, it is important for lead agency staff to compare the strengths and weaknesses of their own agency and the neighborhood as a whole. The selection criteria for the neighborhood services coordinator can then be developed to help fill missing or weak competencies.

Any agency under consideration to act as a neighborhood services coordinator should be highly aligned with the vision and values of the lead agency. As the neighborhood services coordinator will have significantly more interaction with neighborhood residents, it is important that the values, mission, and expectations of the lead agency are accurately reflected in the work as it appears 'on the ground'. This alignment is equally important when the neighborhood services coordinator works with services providers within the project, in order to ensure that programs are running in alignment with the work's desired high-level result and core values.

Many characteristics sought in the neighborhood services coordinator are similar to those sought in the lead agency. The neighborhood services coordinator is beholden to shared accountability for learning and results; should be able to respectfully engage issues of race, class, and culture; and needs to effectively engage community residents in the work. Unlike the lead agency, the neighborhood services coordinator is not necessarily anticipated to forge policy-level and systems change, but should be able to support such work ("Center for the Study of Social Policy," 2017). If, however, it is anticipated that the lead agency may face challenges in pursuing systems-level work, applicants should be sought which have significant experience in enacting systems change.

Working with an "Anchor Agency"

An anchor agency is a pre-existing agency in the neighborhood that already has a strong working relationship with residents. This could be a nonprofit, affiliation group, large institution (such as a hospital or school), or community center. The presence of such an agency should be considered favorable during the neighborhood selection process. During the earliest stages of the project, the neighborhood services coordinator will typically work with the anchor agency to help organize the neighborhood partnership, contribute to the capacity assessment process, participate in neighborhood planning and help spearhead a Learn While Doing project (Brown & Fiester, 2014).

There is an ongoing debate among funders involving the pros and cons of having an existing anchor agency act as the neighborhood services coordinator, as opposed to creating a new governing structure run by neighborhood residents (Kubisch et al., 1997). Those who oppose working through an existing anchor generally believe that a collaborative is an effective and democratic way to organize place-based work. However, others see such an approach as "the equivalent of setting sail in difficult waters with neither captain nor compass" (Miller & Burns, 2006). Current place-based initiatives may draw upon both approaches in a hybrid fashion: employing neighborhood residents in the neighborhood services coordinator; creating a governing structure for the project including neighborhood residents; leveraging the anchor agency's relationship with the neighborhood by facilitating conversations and undertaking needs assessments, but without the anchor acting as the neighborhood services coordinator during the implementation stages; and many more strategies. The exact format for a given effort will vary depending on the presence, strengths, and views of any anchor agencies as well as those of the residents of the neighborhood.

Mobilizing Community Residents

The neighborhood services coordinator must be able to work with neighborhood residents as leaders, owners, and implementers of neighborhood transformation efforts ("Center for the Study of Social Policy," 2017). The form this takes will vary depending on neighborhood capacity and characteristics, the presence or absence of an anchor agency and the nature of its relationship to neighborhood residents, as well as the particular strengths of the agency acting as neighborhood services coordinator.

Outside of efforts that have a grassroots startup, a neighborhood services coordinator typically takes one of three routes to facilitate community engagement when a place-based effort starts up. It may host an intensive

period of organizing and community meetings and allow community voice to develop in a mostly resident-driven way. It may also recruit a core group and charge that group with expanding itself to fill gaps in membership. Or lastly, it may hold elections for governance group membership (McNeely, Aiyetoro, & Bowsher, 1999). The funder should have a rough idea of its preferred process for engaging the community, and take applicants' ability to fulfill that charge into careful consideration during the application and planning processes.

During the implementation of place-based work, it is important that the neighborhood services coordinator is able to continue to engage residents in the work. In large part, this is likely to be by incorporating resident engagement into the structure of the work. This could be by including a governing board composed of local residents, engaging residents in acting as neighbor-leaders or peer supports (such as NAZ Connectors), or involving residents in the process of interpreting data and making continuous improvement changes. Regardless of the form of community engagement adopted by the place-based effort, it is important that the individuals chosen to serve on the board, act as neighbor-leaders or peer support, or engage in other processes are seen by neighborhood residents as being truly *from the neighborhood.* Individuals of all backgrounds who do community work assert that residents are more likely to engage, yield initial trust, follow the lead of, and develop close relations with individuals who are similar to them in age, race, sex, and experience ("NAZ Promise Neighborhood Implementation Grant Application," 2011).

Staffing within the Neighborhood Services Coordinator

If the neighborhood services coordinator is not a pre-existing resident group, care should be taken to ensure that staffing is as representative of the area to be served as possible. Within the Promise Neighborhood program, neighborhood service coordinators who are not representative of the service area may instead have or develop either a governing board or an advisory board that meets the requirements for being representative of the service area ("Promise Neighborhoods Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) FY 2016," 2016). The Promise Neighborhood program restricts the 'public officials' to one-half of the governing or advisory board. United Way's work, due to its small scale, is unlikely to include a large percentage of public officials such as members of the school board, legislators, or council members, but may quickly attract the attention of nonprofits and service providers interested in being on the board. A similar restriction to board membership could be considered in order to ensure the voice of the board is dominated by resident voice.

In many sites, a site director is hired to work in the neighborhood services coordinator. The site director is a resident of the neighborhood, and may vary considerably in educational backgrounds and experience. Common backgrounds include individuals with experience in community organizing, ministry, urban planning, human services, business, elected public office. When an individual is not identified from the neighborhood, individuals who live close to the service area or with experience working in the neighborhood or neighborhoods nearby are often sought.

For the site directors, involvement in place-based work is often a personal growth journey – they are exposed to new challenges and demands that need negotiating, and they develop many new technical and soft skills. The most successful site directors share a commitment to the funder's basic goals and values, especially a deep belief in community engagement and ownership. They also have experience and/or training in neighborhood work coupled with familiarity of the service area and the networks connecting it to the wider city. Soft skills that are necessary include the ability to stay focused despite conflicting agendas, the ability to work collaboratively in the face of pushback, and a strategic understanding of the links between neighborhood change and city-level practice and policy. Due to the demanding nature of the role and the quickly-developing professional skills gained by many site directors, the turnover rate can be as high as 50% in the first two years, with many individuals moving on as they gain the capacity to pursue a different career (Brown & Fiester, 2014).

Supporting Cross-Sector Partnership

While it is ultimately the responsibility of the lead agency to determine which partnerships will be forged in order to support place-based work, it is in reality the neighborhood services coordinator who will often be tasked with maintaining those partnerships on the ground and sharing accountability for results ("Center for the Study of Social Policy," 2017).

Acting as a Vehicle for Capacity Building

Neighborhood services coordinators work to deepen organizational and leadership capacity. This can be done internally, for the effort as a whole, and for neighborhood residents ("Center for the Study of Social Policy," 2017). When the effort is able to partner with a pre-existing anchor, the site director specifically (or the key staff person in the neighborhood services coordinator) – and the emerging neighborhood partnership more broadly – can benefit from the infrastructure, knowledge, and networks of an organization already embedded in the neighborhood that supports the

effort's goals and values. Capacity-building in this instance is most likely to occur through collaboration and skills training as needed.

Where an anchor does not exist, it is often deemed necessary to build a local support team around the site director or key staff person within the neighborhood services coordinator, and then work to build the capacity of the team as a whole rather than solely the site director (Brown & Fiester, 2014). A support team is ideally representative of the cross sector partnership, including the lead agency, key neighborhood organizations, service providers, and resident leadership. Support teams may include an individual specialized in a form of technical assistance that is deemed especially important to the work such as grant writing, data management, communications, etc. This individual is often situated in a university or citywide organization that routinely provides training and technical assistance. The team as a whole is trained, therefore buffering the effort from the disruptions caused by anticipated site director turnover.

The teams generally operate less as formal bodies and more as a network of people and organizations sufficiently knowledgeable and invested in capacity-building process to support the planning process and sustain the neighborhood's work.

The responsibility of designing and implementing capacity-building efforts is shared between the lead agency and the neighborhood services coordinator, and the exact division of labor will depend on local circumstances. But the organization acting as the neighborhood services coordinator must be prepared to take on additional staff, provide dedicated staff, collaborate with a support team, attend or facilitate trainings, and generally be involved in a number of capacity-building efforts that take place in and adjacent to the organization. This work will necessarily change the way of work for the neighborhood services coordinator, both by restructuring and skills development, as well as take considerable staff effort and organizational resources.

Ways of Work ("Promise Neighborhoods Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) FY 2016," 2016)

An organization that takes up the mantle of neighborhood services coordinator ideally is already providing services related to at least one barrier anticipated to be found in the neighborhood, or which has been previously identified through a needs assessment. This is more important than the organization being geographically located in the neighborhood, as a branch office can be opened in whichever space is used to house co-located services. Other considerations to be taken into account include the

organization's legal status, which is ideally either a nonprofit or educational institution. Organizations with these statuses are often better-suited to partner in a cross-sector way. An applicant that is not an educational institution ideally has experience partnering with a school, in order to allow direct influence in neighborhood children's educational environment. In most cases, government entities (city, county, or higher) are not preferred applicants and in some grants, they are disallowed. This is largely due to the contentious relationship between government officials and residents found in many neighborhoods across the country.

Ability to Support Data Collection

Many of the impact and communication advantages of place-based work depend on obtaining complete and accurate data. The neighborhood services coordinator oversees this work, while individual service providers do the job of collecting data. The neighborhood services coordinator, in conjunction with the lead agency, residents, and other stakeholders, is responsible for compiling, analyzing, and using data for learning and accountability, as well as designing and implementing strategies based on the best available evidence of what works ("Center for the Study of Social Policy," 2017).

A win-win partnership approach for the task of data collection and interpretation may be one generally found in public health: Community Based Participatory Research (Harlem Children's Zone, 2012). This approach has six core principles:

1. Promotes active collaboration and participation at every stage of resea rch;
2. Fosters co-learning;
3. Ensures projects are community-driven;
4. Disseminates results in useful terms;
5. Ensures research and intervention strategies are culturally appropriate ; and
6. Defines community as a unit of identity [for UWOC, this is taken to be at the neighborhood level].

This approach allows researchers (or in this case, the funder, lead agency, and neighborhood services coordinator) to direct their effort towards activities that address real community need. It also encourages the development of more culturally- and linguistically-appropriate interventions, increases participation in the effort, and builds a better 'real-world' understanding of the limitations of certain interventions and strategies. By involving the community in the work of data collection and interpretation,

the neighborhood services coordinator is better able to interpret results in context, rely on resident expertise in the subject area, and gain community buy-in while improving the place-based effort's reputation.

This approach also has many benefits to service providers. By demonstrating the effectiveness of their work and strengthening the evaluation culture in their organization, they are often able to influence policy in their field, access additional funding and resources, and gain credibility by presenting their results. They also often find that they are able to answer internal questions about their own programs or participants, use data to improve their work, and benefit from the outside perspective that external stakeholders may bring.

SUMMARY AND NEXT STEPS

A place-based approach has the potential to lead to improved outcomes for children and their families by reducing barriers to access, addressing barriers that are shared by residents of a given neighborhood, providing services in a concentrated way to those hardest to reach, and increasing social capital of a given neighborhood. Place-based approaches also have a number of communication and resource development advantages which can lead to increased support for the work. These advantages include the ability to demonstrate program impact, the ability to demonstrate that the program makes change 'in-place' rather than via gentrification or displacement, and the program's ability to target a priority population.

How a place-based effort is structured depends largely on local context, with each of the three key stakeholders – lead agency, neighborhood services coordinator, and the neighborhood itself – complementing the strengths and skills of one another.

An ideal neighborhood has the potential for cross-sector partnership, "just-right capacity," a pre-existing anchor, a neighborhood school that is willing to partner, and a history of disinvestment.

An ideal lead agency (and funder) is able to provide clarity to the work, facilitate co-learning efforts to understand the work at hand, maintain consistency, be a changemaker (by sharing accountability for learning and results; respectfully engaging issues of race, class, and culture, forging policy-level and systems change, and effectively engaging community residents in the work), convening and leveraging resources, and allowing for time.

An ideal neighborhood services coordinator is able to work effectively with an anchor agency, mobilize community residents, provide effective and appropriate staffing to the effort, support cross-sector partnership, act as a vehicle for capacity building, and implement a continuum of solution in the neighborhood.

The way in which the roles of these three stakeholders manifest is largely dependent on local conditions and pre-existing strengths and resources found in the neighborhood and lead agency.

For United Way, the next steps will involve taking inventory of the strengths and weaknesses of its four candidate neighborhoods, as well as conducting an internal assessment. Depending on the neighborhood, the position description for a neighborhood services coordinator will vary depending on which roles it is required to take on in order to complement pre-existing assets in the neighborhood and United Way.

United Way staff will then compare the four position descriptions to determine which one is both has a high likelihood of finding a fitting candidate, as well as which way of work offers the highest chance of success. This position description can then be used to begin drafting an RFP.

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