



ALBANY PARK NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCIL ■ BLOCKS TOGETHER ■ COALITION OF AFRICAN, ARAB, ASIAN, EUROPEAN & LATINO IMMIGRANTS OF ILLINOIS CHICAGO ACORN ■ CHICAGO INTERFAITH COMMITTEE ON WORKER ISSUES ■ DEVELOPING COMMUNITIES PROJECT ■ INTERFAITH FEDERATION ■ JANE ADDAMS SENIOR CAUCUS ■ KENWOOD OAKLAND COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION ■ LAKE COUNTY CENTER FOR

INDEPENDENT LIVING ■ ORGANIZATION OF THE NORTHEAST ■ SOUTH SUBURBAN ACTION CONFERENCE ■ SOUTHWEST ORGANIZING PROJECT ■ TARGET AREA ■ WEST TOWN LEADERSHIP UNITED

PEOPLE POWER & POLICY IMPACT

*A report on the Chicago Community Organizing Capacity Building Initiative's **Policy Project***



Letter from the Director

At a Ford Foundation meeting last November, Alice Ito of the Marguerite Casey Foundation put it this way: *Grassroots organizing is an effective strategy for democratizing the policy process.*

The practice of engaging neighborhood residents and community leaders around areas of mutual concern is not new. It can be slow, tedious work, especially when the problems at hand require complex, multi-level solutions. But the process of bringing to bear the insights and experiences of those directly impacted—along with their compassion and perseverance—is a vital means to realizing our American ideal of democracy.

Much has been learned about both community organizing and capacity building during the short life of CCBI, the Chicago Community Organizing Capacity Building Initiative. Perhaps most importantly, we've learned that grassroots community organizations can and do work best collaboratively. When CCBI first started, many of these groups did not know each other, much less work together. The Policy Project has proven a fruitful catalyst for the fifteen organizations participating in CCBI. As a group, they have developed new relationships, built trust and partnered in ways that have resulted in policy gains for low-income residents.

Today, Latino, Asian and African American organizations march together for immigrants' rights. Organizations working to ensure fair wages for retail

employees are partnering with organizations seeking the presence of the same 'big box' retailers in mixed-use neighborhood developments. And the coalition advocating for affordable housing is now city-wide, recognizing that the socio-economic impact of gentrification affects all communities.

People Power & Policy Impact is the story of a group of Chicago organizations supporting one another in policy campaigns with funding, solidarity and mutual respect. We thank the W.K. Kellogg Foundation for making the Policy Project possible, and we are deeply grateful to all of our funding partners for making CCBI a reality. They are listed on the inside back cover.

Onward,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Leslie Ramyk'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Leslie Ramyk
CCBI Director

March 2007

Executive Summary

Community organizing has evolved beyond the fight for a neighborhood stop sign. In Chicago and across the country, community organizations are winning policy changes that impact the lives of thousands if not millions of residents. These organizations, of course, are led by the very same people affected by social problems, and they bring a special kind of expertise and ability to bear on how to solve those problems.

The Chicago Community Organizing Capacity Building Initiative comes to a close in 2007. It has been more than six years since local funders responded to a Ford Foundation initiative that invested \$1.5 million in each of three regional funders' collaboratives over three years. The project is now one of five created in Denver, Miami-Dade County, Los Angeles and a multi-state collaborative in the rural South. The purpose was to provide re-granting funds and technical assistance to build the capacity of local community organizing groups, and to strengthen philanthropic support for community-based organizing.

In Chicago, seven coalitions participated in the Initiative's culminating effort: the Policy Project, supported by a \$75,000 grant from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. The Policy Project was a joint effort to focus the organizers and leaders of community groups on large-scale public policy. As organizer Patricia Watkins of TARGET put it, "the problems we address often have causes outside the community, so we have to work outside our community to address those problems." This and other insights, such as community organizing groups' need to work in coalition with each other and with professional advocacy organizations to achieve their goals, crystallized in the seven campaigns the Policy Project supported with modest grants ranging from \$5,000 to \$12,500.

The impact of these small infusions of cash was out of proportion to the dollar totals. The Living Wage Coalition's work resulted in the Chicago city

council passing an ordinance to raise wages of employees working in "big box" retail stores—over the objections of Mayor Richard M. Daley. While the mayor ultimately vetoed the initiative and swayed enough city council members to reduce what had been a veto-proof majority, the campaign garnered national media attention. Local political analysts pointed to the Big Box fight as a turning point for Chicago politics. The Balanced Development Coalition advocated for affordable-housing set asides in all new Chicago housing development; ultimately, 26 aldermen (out of 50) pledged to support an ordinance that would mandate a fixed percentage of set asides—again despite the mayor's objections. In these and all five of the other funded campaigns, organizers credited the support of the Policy Project as both timely and essential to their success.

Although based on interviews and direct observation by an outside consultant, People Power & Policy Impact is not an evaluation. Instead, this brief clarifies the role of community organizing in the corridors of power, where policy is debated, shaped, and ultimately implemented. It also highlights unique aspects of the Policy Project, such as choices organizers made when they took on the role of funders, as well as documenting how the funds were actually used. Finally, it recaps lessons learned from the project and suggests how foundations might address community organizing's approach to policy and advocacy.



Chicago Community Organizing Capacity Building Initiative (CCBI)

The Chicago Community Organizing Capacity Building Initiative was designed to increase the effectiveness of grassroots community organizing. Eight Chicago-area foundations created the Initiative in 1999 in response to a Ford Foundation request for proposals. Ford staff chose Chicago, Los Angeles and the rural South to re-grant funds and provide technical assistance to a cohort of organizations. The Chicago intermediary selected twelve local organizations through a competitive process, provided annual capacity-building grants for three years and convened the organizations for technical assistance trainings and peer sharing. The first cycle of the Initiative ran through the end of 2003.

Based on the first round's success, a second cycle of CCBI funding commenced in 2004 as a full-fledged funders' collaborative with thirteen local and national funding partners, including the Ford Foundation. Ford also added an additional two sites to the national mix: Denver and Miami-Dade County.

The second phase of the Initiative emphasized the desired outcome of increased efficacy in policy impact. Serving as a steering committee, local representatives from participating foundations selected sixteen organizations through a competitive process, including a number that had participated in the first cycle (one later dropped out). Each participating organization received annual grants to address organizational development needs; regular convenings helped build group solidarity and relationships between organizers. Both provided useful preparation for the Policy Project.

ORGANIZATION	ISSUE AREA(S)	GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION(S)	MODEL/AFFILIATION	DEMOGRAPHICS
Albany Park Neighborhood Council	Education, Housing, Youth, Healthcare Access, Immigrants' Rights	Albany Park, West Ridge, Irving Park, North Park (mid-northwest)	Members are dues-paying institutions; originally NTIC/ NPA now independent	Highly diverse across religion and ethnicity; mostly immigrant; low-income
Blocks Together*	Education, Housing, Community Safety, Healthcare Access, Youth, Women's Issues	West Humboldt & North Garfield Park (west by northwest)	Members are dues-paying residents; originally NTIC/ NPA, now independent	African American and Latina/o, immigrant; low-income
Chicago ACORN*	Education, Housing, Predatory Lending, Living Wage, Immigrants' Rights, Healthcare Access, Community Safety, Ex-offender reintegration	Englewood, North Lawndale, South Lawndale, Little Village (south and west sides); low-income	Members are dues-paying residents; affiliated with National ACORN	African American (Englewood & North Lawndale), Latina/o
Chicago Interfaith Committee on Worker Issues*	Workers Rights, Immigrants' Rights, Community-Labor Coalitions	City-wide	Workers and religious leaders comprise membership; affiliated with Interfaith Worker Justice	Diverse religious; Latino, African American and Polish; low-income
Coalition of African, Arab, Asian, European & Latino Immigrants of IL	Immigrants' Rights, Healthcare Access	City-wide	Coalition of member institutions	Diverse immigrant and refugee communities; low-income
Developing Communities Project*	Education and Youth Services, Transportation, Economic Development, Community Safety	Greater Roseland (far south side)	Congregation-based with some neighborhood institutions, dues-paying membership; originally Gamaliel Foundation, now independent	African American; moderate and low-income
Interfaith Federation*	Environmental Justice, Immigrants' Rights, Regional Transportation	Northwest Indiana	Congregation-based dues-paying membership; originally Gamaliel Foundation, now independent	African American, Latino; moderate and low-income
Jane Addams Senior Caucus	Seniors: Homecare, Housing, Access to Social Services	North Side	Membership comprised of individuals (seniors)	Immigrant Eastern European, Korean, African American, white; low-income
Kenwood Oakland Community Organization	Education, Housing, Employment, Community Safety, Youth	Bronzeville, Kenwood Oakland (mid-south, lakefront)	Membership comprised of neighborhood residents	African American; low-income
Lake County Center for Independent Living	Persons with Disabilities: Accessibility across Education, Housing, Transportation	Far north suburban	Members are persons with disabilities and their allies; affiliated with Industrial Areas Foundation	White, African American, Latina/o; moderate and low-income; persons with disabilities
Organization of the NorthEast*	Education, Housing, Immigrants' Rights, Employment, Homelessness, Ex-offender reintegration, Youth	Uptown, Edgewater; Rogers Park (far north lakefront)	Members are dues-paying institutions, affiliated with Industrial Areas Foundation	Highly diverse mix of ethnicities: white, African American, Latina/o, Asian, immigrant
South Suburban Action Conference	Education Funding Reform, Racial Justice, Regional Transportation, Immigrants' Rights	South Suburbs	Congregation-based, dues-paying membership; affiliated with Gamaliel Foundation	African American; moderate and low-income
Southwest Organizing Project*	Education, Housing, Community Safety, Immigrants' Rights, Ex-offender reintegration	Chicago Lawn, Marquette Park Gage Park, West Lawn, West Elsdon (southwest side)	Members are dues-paying institutions; affiliated with Industrial Areas Foundation	White, Latina/o, African American, Palestinian, Muslim, Catholic, immigrants; low-income
TARGET Area*	Education, Living Wage, Community Safety, Racial Justice, Ex-offender reintegration, Healthcare Access, Sentencing Reform	Auburn Gresham, Englewood (south side)	Members are neighborhood residents; previously mentored by Community Renewal Society	African American
West Town Leadership United*	Education, Housing, Immigrants' Rights, Healthcare Access	West Town, Humboldt Park (near northwest side)	Individuals, predominantly parents/ mothers, comprise membership; affiliated with COFI	Latina, Mexican and Puerto Rican, African American; low-income

*Organizations that participated in both cycles of CCBI

Local Context

Chicago today is internationally well regarded for the style of living it affords to its more affluent residents. While many say the “city that works” fails to work equally well for everyone, such concerns have been muted. Chicago has a well-earned reputation as Mayor Daley’s town. Regardless of race, ethnicity or economic level, a majority of aldermen vote with the mayor on virtually all issues of note. The mayor has used this power to advance his agenda for the city, from the direction of the school system to the construction of Millennium Park.

That control slipped with corruption indictments of high-level Chicago officials in 2006. As it happened, well-prepared community organizations and coalitions were able to take advantage of this and other election year opportunities to introduce alternative policy initiatives. Neighborhood-level shifts in economic and housing development propelled a growing constituency concerned with the availability of affordable housing and living wage jobs; community organizations led by those constituencies developed and proposed city-wide housing and fair wage solutions.

In addition, Chicago’s community organizing groups have increasingly looked to the state level to address policy issues of concern. Since eight Chicago foundations applied to the Ford Foundation for the initial CCBI grant in 1999, a Democratic governor, senate and house have replaced over twenty years of Republican domination of state government. Community organizations have found administrators willing to address the challenges of ex-offender reintegration, community safety and treatment programs for non-violent drug offenders.

But like many states with big cities, the relationship between Chicago and the rest of the state is sometimes marked by tension. This has made it all the more imperative for these groups to reach out to allies, especially in the state capital of Springfield—in particular, professional associations and interest



groups, from the powerful Illinois Retail Merchants Association to the well-connected Chicago Bar Association. While these groups and others have become important allies in some of the campaigns discussed in *People Power & Policy Impact*, their methods of creating change differ notably from community organizing groups. Typically, they bring specialized knowledge and long-term relationships with legislators, while community organizations bring detailed knowledge of on-the-ground conditions, large constituencies in impacted neighborhoods, and a broader range of interests.

Immigrant communities are also finding their voice—and power—through grassroots organizations, tackling rights and reform issues at both the state and federal levels. During the first cycle of CCBI, several organizations participated in a successful effort to allow undocumented Illinois high school graduates to attend state colleges and universities at in-state tuition rates. And on May 1, 2006, over 500,000 people marched peacefully through downtown Chicago demanding changes in federal immigration policy.

Community Organizing

The groups that participated in the Initiative engage in different styles of community organizing, with the following basic practices in common. They all:

1. Work for equity
2. Engage a large base of participants and act democratically
3. Develop leaders and their social capital
4. Build power for their constituents to address their concerns

Community leaders may be individuals or representatives from member institutions. They are low- and moderate-income individuals, people whose voices are generally absent from policy discussions that affect their lives and communities. Through one to one conversations and other meetings that build relationships based on mutual self-interest, they engage people in dialogues about their concerns. Governing boards of the organizations select issues and/or specific solutions based on the concerns and ideas raised in these processes.

One key consideration of organizers is leadership development, the process of nurturing participants' skills, self-esteem, and sense of self-efficacy—all of which are needed to take on issues of concern. Another key consideration is turnout. One way community organizations demonstrate their efficacy is by turning out large numbers of people who are concerned about an issue. Large numbers of active people convey the importance of an issue and often convince policy makers that they need to take action. In short, community organizations mobilize a large base of people, build their capacity to act and create a system of accountability that results in a positive change.

Even when they seek to inform local, state, or federal regulations, organizers rely on their leadership to meet directly with legislators and other officials. Individual community organizations often find they lack the power

they need to achieve significant policy impact on their own. However, these organizations can achieve their ends by participating in or creating coalitions with other organizations as well as advocates and other institutions. In the CCBI Policy Project, every funded group was a coalition that included between two and eight of the participating organizations.



The Policy Project

Early in 2005, the W.K. Kellogg Foundation contributed \$75,000 to CCBI to support a Policy Project for the cohort of funded organizations. The Policy Project would build on the relationships developed among participating organizations and provide new opportunities to collaborate in their work.

The Project was intentionally designed to allow the organizers to decide together how to allocate the Kellogg grant; the original proposal stipulated that the groups would pursue two or three policy issues. In addition to supporting research, media, materials, coordination and transportation as related to the policy issues, the Policy Project budget included funds to support the documentation of the project, planning meetings and the publication of this report. The Crossroads Fund, a contributing CCBI partner and active steering committee participant, served as fiscal agent.

The group of organizers considered projects large and small. Among the ideas they considered were projects to build an understanding of the impact of race and ethnicity on issues of concern, to develop a “People’s Agenda” linking multiple concerns to a single campaign, to highlight potential leverage points in policy work by conducting a power analysis of political and business influence in Chicago, and to tackle specific timely issues.

Two factors made it challenging for the group to implement campaigns based on these discussions: timing and the organizations’ capacity to take on ambitious new projects. The organizers needed to allocate the money for the Policy Project by summer 2006. Organizing requires a high level of buy-in from members. For CCBI participants to engage in new campaigns, their constituents would need to have time to assess the relationship of these potential campaigns to their concerns, and participate in planning the steps they would take to address these issues. Second, CCBI participants already had a significant number of efforts under way that limited their capacity to take on additional work. Many of these efforts were gaining momentum just

at the time the Policy Project needed to make a decision on how and where to allocate funds, which meant that staff from the participating organizations were already busy with their ongoing efforts.

Given the time and capacity constraints, the organizers dedicated their monthly meetings to probing promising issues; in the process, they engaged in discussions of race and ethnicity and analyzed the role of private influence on public concerns in Chicago. But in trying to identify only two or three issues to fund, a new problem emerged: such a decision would inevitably leave some of the CCBI participants out, creating the potential to damage the fragile solidarity among groups that routinely compete for resources and credit for their achievements.

Recognizing that a long-term goal of building solidarity was at least as important as short-term campaign objectives, they decided to spread the money around. Ultimately, the organizers assigned grants of as little as \$5,000 and as much as \$12,500 to seven coalitions, each of which included two or more CCBI organizations. Coalitions with participation from more CCBI organizations received more funding. All of the coalitions also included non-CCBI partners, such as other organizations, labor unions, academic institutions, and advocacy partners. The funding decisions also turned on the specific objectives groups said the funds would help them to achieve. But participating organizations paid at least as much attention to who was asking and attempted to meet the needs of all. A table highlighting the Policy Project’s funded groups is on the facing page.

CCBI Policy Project Allocations

COLLABORATION: CAMPAIGN (Location)	CCBI PARTNERS	ALLOCATION	EXPENDITURES	GOALS/OUTCOMES
Balanced Development Coalition Housing Set Aside (Chicago)	Organization of the NorthEast, West Town Leadership United, ACORN, Jane Addams Senior Caucus, Kenwood Oakland Community Organization, TARGET, Albany Park Neighborhood Council, Blocks Together	\$12,500	Internal and external communications, relationship building & logistics management; media outreach and story pitching.	Educate aldermen on the need and support for a citywide affordable housing set-aside policy.
Living Wage Coalition Big Box Campaign (Chicago)	ACORN, CICWI, TARGET, Albany Park Neighborhood Council, Blocks Together, Jane Addams Senior Caucus, West Town Leadership United	\$12,500	Hire a firm to gather specific data in Chicago wards to determine voter support for 'Big Box' ordinance	Demonstrate support for a \$10 per hour minimum wage for workers at stores greater than 90,000 sq. ft. Educate aldermen on the issue.
Developing Justice Coalition Drug Diversion & Treatment (Illinois)	TARGET, Southwest Organizing Project, Organization of the NorthEast, Developing Communities Project, ACORN	\$9,000	Travel, communications materials and logistics management for legislative briefings and statewide outreach.	Educate public and elected officials on the efficacy and economic feasibility of drug diversion and treatment programs.
No Separate Peace Immigration Policy (Regional & Federal)	CAAAELI, West Town Leadership United, TARGET	\$7,500	Transportation to meet with elected officials in Illinois, Indiana, Wisconsin, Michigan, and Washington DC, including materials and coordination.	Build bridges through a shared analysis of immigration issues among African Americans, Latinos & other immigrant groups; educate state and federal elected officials.
Bi-State Transportation Leadership Table (Northwest Indiana, South Suburbs, Chicago)	Interfaith Federation, South Suburban Action Conference	\$6,000	Print and distribute information for community members, provide local training for leaders, and cover all expenses for town hall meetings.	Educate and mobilize leaders to provide community input into planning, implementation and evaluation of transportation decisions.
Community Care Coalition Homecare for Seniors & Persons with Disabilities (Illinois)	Jane Addams Senior Caucus, Lake County Center for Independent Living	\$5,000	Research by Center for Tax & Budget Accountability on economic impact and models from other states for in-home vs. nursing-home care; develop strategy.	Change Illinois' community-care program for seniors to gain parity with similar system for people with disabilities; advocate for keeping seniors in home communities.
School Closings Study Measuring Impact on Students (Chicago)	Kenwood Oakland Community Organization, ACORN, Blocks Together	\$5,000	Research by University of Illinois professor documenting effects of school closings on students, families and communities on South & West sides of Chicago.	Educate elected officials and business leaders to gain support for a moratorium on new school closings.
TOTAL	ALL 15 ORGANIZATIONS	\$57,500	RESEARCH, MEDIA, MATERIALS, COORDINATION, TRANSPORTATION	PUBLIC POLICY IMPACT

Impact

As the table indicates and as stated at the outset of *People Power & Policy Impact*, the past year has in fact seen dramatic policy changes in Chicago, at a time when state and federal domestic policy has also been a major battleground. The coalitions funded by the Policy Project had the greatest impact at the local level, as indicated by these brief summaries of the seven campaigns:

The **BALANCED DEVELOPMENT COALITION** took 100 members from eight organizations on a bus tour to Aldermen's offices across the city, where they pressed demands for an effective citywide affordable housing policy. The role of campaign leaders, that is, people who spoke about the need for affordable housing from personal experience, illustrates what organizers mean when they refer to leadership development. The Balanced Development Coalition's work resulted in an increase in the number of aldermen in support of a city ordinance that would mandate a fixed percentage of affordable-housing set asides in all new housing developments, and by late 2006 Mayor Daley introduced a version of the ordinance himself.

The **LIVING WAGE COALITION**, a broad-based coalition that included CCBI groups, key labor allies and the Brennan Center for Justice at the New York University School of Law, used Policy Project funds to conduct professional opinion polls in targeted wards to assess support for the proposed Big Box ordinance. The ordinance called for Chicago retail stores over 90,000 square feet and \$1 billion in sales to eventually pay employees \$10 an hour and provide \$3 an hour in benefits. The poll found up to 84 percent in some South and West Side wards in favor. After the poll, organizers were out every day knocking on doors in the neighborhoods. Residents who spoke to the door-knockers were invited to use a cell phone to immediately



call their alderman. While the polling helped dictate the strategy, the personal calls were a powerful tool. Demonstrating the added value of community organizing, such calls were transformative—for many residents, it was the first time they had ever called their alderman's office.

DEVELOPING JUSTICE COALITION leaders built their campaign on an understanding of the cycle of crime that ensues when nonviolent ex-offenders are unable to find employment or other resources because of their past convictions. Funds from the Policy Project were used for town hall meetings and hearings around the state on the topic of alternative sentencing and treatment for nonviolent drug offenders. Formerly incarcerated men and women gave testimony and offered viable policy solutions to the challenges they faced. The hearings provided an opportunity for the Coalition to educate state legislators as well as cement relationships with strategic partners such as Chicago Metropolis 2020, the Illinois Retail Merchants Association and the Chicago Bar Association. Funds were also used for outreach and communications in conjunction with the town hall meetings; what began as a Chicago grassroots collaboration is now emerging as a statewide movement.

NO SEPARATE PEACE used its Policy Project funds to bring a multi-racial and multi-cultural delegation to Washington, D.C. to meet with Congressional leaders on the issue of immigration reform. The fact that African Americans, Latinos, Asians and other ethnic-group leaders collaborated on the project lent potency to their arguments and helped the group stand out from other advocates on the issue as they educated members of Congress and other officials. Organizers utilized travel, meals and other down time to encourage participants to meet one another and honestly explore both the differences and commonalities in their experiences. Participants returned with renewed optimism in their cause and enthusiasm for their deepened relationships with one another.



The **BI-STATE TRANSPORTATION LEADERSHIP TABLE** used its funds to provide focused, intensive training and town hall meetings for Northwest Indiana and Chicago grassroots leaders. Five organizations from Northwest Indiana and Chicago met to discuss their common issues with transportation (specifically airports) and economic development as the nexus. Both clergy and lay leaders prioritized the agenda for this regional table. The leaders organized a full-day retreat, developed the materials and content for the issues, and created implementation committees. Delegates will educate others; all will meet with

public officials to address their concerns. The goal is the creation of a community coalition to provide input to public fund allocations and policies.

The **COMMUNITY CARE COALITION** commissioned the nonprofit Center for Tax and Budget Accountability to research and analyze the cost of expanding Illinois' Community Care Program. The Program enables seniors to access homecare services and avoid or postpone institutionalization in nursing homes. Ultimately, the Coalition seeks to increase hours of service available to seven days and expand services to include personal care. The Coalition has used the results of the research and analysis to draft guidelines to improve the Community Care Program and has brought seniors, local legislators and potential partners together to discuss the recommendations.

Three Chicago organizations collaborated on a **SCHOOL CLOSINGS STUDY** to document the impact of Chicago Board of Education school closings policies. They hired a University of Illinois at Chicago researcher to follow students from closed schools to their receiving schools. Dr. Pauline Lipman interviewed teachers, parents and students at four schools. The data confirmed what the community knew "anecdotally": that school closings and displacement destabilized receiving schools, resulting in negative educational outcomes. The study brought new research into the field of education in general and Chicago school reform in particular. The south, west and north side community organizations will utilize the study in their ongoing campaigns at the local and state levels.

Lessons Learned

Community organizing groups have played many roles in policy campaigns over the years. What was unusual about the Policy Project, however, was the opportunity it provided to document this process every step of the way. Here are highlights of lessons learned during the process, followed by several recommendations based on the participants' experiences:

AUTHENTIC EXPERIENCES ARE KEY: “You have to have people’s stories to make the case for policy change,” says Lori Clark, Jane Addams Senior Caucus. Not only do they have greater impact and lend themselves to better media outreach, stories that embody the policy changes sought by a campaign provide important feedback for the organizers. “These stories will tell you if you are on the right track with your policy work,” Clark says. Debra Strickland, Developing Communities Project, echoed this insight. She kicked off her group’s involvement with the Developing Justice Coalition by taking her group’s leaders to an early coalition meeting. This built their understanding of and ability to speak on the issues related to ex-offenders and helped the group reach out to ex-offenders in their own South Side community. Ultimately, ex-offenders themselves traveled to Springfield to speak directly to their elected officials.

SCALE MATTERS, BUT BIGGER IS NOT ALWAYS BETTER: Major new policy changes that start from scratch require major infusions of cash, notes Sarah Jane Knoy, Organization of the NorthEast. A full-on campaign to change the state of affordable housing in Chicago might require a grant of hundreds of thousands, she says. On the other hand, medium-sized grants with similarly lofty goals can backfire. Not only are they unequal to the task, they may create competition and jealousy between partners who must collaborate to get things done. Yet, smaller grants, appropriately timed and strategically invest-

ed, can have significant impact on campaigns. Similarly Jay Travis, Kenwood Oakland Community Organization, notes that small grants provided money at key points in advocacy campaigns where coalitions needed to continue to apply “heat” or risk losing ground.



GRASSROOTS GROUPS NEED TO WORK TOGETHER ACROSS GEOGRAPHIC, RACIAL AND ETHNIC BOUNDARIES: A single group or community often lacks the power required to win a policy change that extends to an entire city, region of the state, or beyond. For this reason, notes Jeff Bartow,

SouthWest Organizing Project, linking issues that matter to both African American and Latino constituencies increases the power of all organizations to act on these issues. Knoy adds that Chicago’s many new coalitions of community organizing groups and other partners have created new pressure on politicians and policy makers. “It creates an entirely new power dynamic when policy makers see people from different communities come together on an issue,” Knoy says, “as they can no longer play one organization against another or ignore an issue because they do not believe it impacts them or their constituents.”

COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS SHOULD BE READY TO PARTNER WITH “EXPERT” GROUPS:

Traditional advocacy work is built on expertise with and an understanding of the technical process of policy making—from working knowledge of committee structures to legislative and regulatory processes to knowing who’s who in the halls and back rooms of local and state government.

Community organizations whose staff and leaders do not participate full-time in these processes are at a disadvantage. Jenny Arwade, Albany Park Neighborhood Council, points out different organizational cultures can raise challenges to such collaborations, but that one of the skills community organizations are learning from this process is how to manage such relationships. While community organizing groups cannot do policy work alone, Arwade says, they must learn how to structure a collaborative, recognize points of tension created by the structure—particularly around policy negotiations—and put thought into how to coordinate with non-organizing groups on policy work.

ORGANIZING HAS ITS OWN PROCESS AND STYLE: Virtually all of the organizers who participated in the Policy Project noted that tension between community organizing and advocacy partners can develop as different expectations, motivations and timetables create strategic or tactical disagreements. Varying approaches to confrontation was a key difference; often efforts to change power dynamics lead to confrontations with policy makers and politicians. All sides of the policy debate will need to address the issues of power and confrontation and create new ways to do business. Knoy points out that if community organizations are serious about policy work, they will have to have conversations with politicians that are neither confrontational nor “business as usual.” She admits this can be difficult for some organizations to do, but organizations must train their leaders, politicians, and policy makers to have meaningful conversations on the issues to achieve policy change.

POLICY WORK IS INTEGRAL TO COMMUNITY ORGANIZING: Working on larger policy issues “helped us get the attention of people in power,” says Idida Perez, West Town Leadership United. Robin Hood, ACORN, puts this even more directly; as he says, “You have to inform policy in order to get what the community wants.”

FUNDERS AND ORGANIZERS MAY HAVE DIFFERENT PRIORITIES:

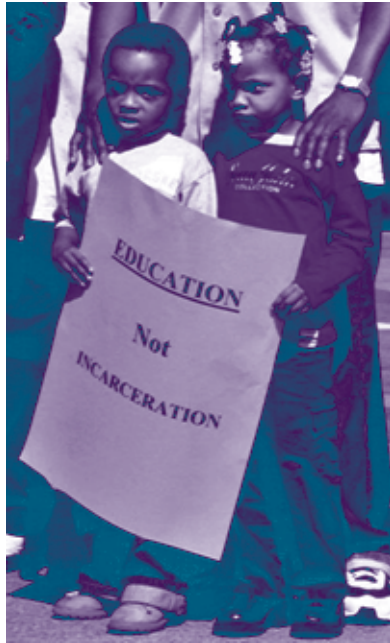
The lessons above focus on the experiences of the community organizations, but the members of the CCBI steering committee also learned from the Policy Project experience. They were surprised, and some even disappointed, that the organizations chose to support seven campaigns instead of just two or three. Jeanne Kracher, Crossroads Fund, questioned the hesitation to coalesce around one or two key issues. Mae Hong, Field Foundation, compared the decisions of the group to a once-common funding strategy that is undergoing increasing scrutiny: making several smaller grants as opposed to fewer larger grants. But Phil Thomas, Chicago Community Trust, endorsed the groups’ decision, noting that the commitment to include all and exclude none demonstrated the kind of relationship building he hoped might emerge from CCBI. Ultimately, the steering committee supported the groups’ slate of campaigns, and in response to a formal request from the organizations, supplemented the Policy Project with an additional \$5,250.

Recommendations

Two conclusions flow from People Power & Policy Impact:

FOUNDATIONS SEEKING TO AFFECT PUBLIC POLICY OR STIMULATE PUBLIC ADVOCACY SHOULD SUPPORT COLLABORATIONS OF COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS TO UNDERTAKE SUCH EFFORTS. Foundations may wish to consider both small, timely grants to complete tactical work related to a policy issue and larger, long-term grants to support innovative strategies and policy initiatives. In doing so, they should be intentional about both process and outcome. For this reason, coordinating convenings and giving organizers the opportunity to step out of traditional roles can be beneficial. Certainly, one example of this is letting the organizations try on the ‘funder’s hat’ as was done in the Policy Project.

METHODS MATTER. From a distance, different approaches to the same goal—informing policy—look similar. However, closer examination shows that organizing is not the same as other forms of advocacy. In addition to changing policy, it both traces its inspiration back to, for lack of a better term, everyday people, while at the same time the process operates on these individuals by giving those who choose to participate a chance to develop their talents as public leaders. Thus for community organizing groups, the process itself plays a large role in the ultimate outcome: not just achieving policy impact, but building communities of people ready and willing to engage in active democracy.



CCBI STEERING COMMITTEE

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CCBI FUNDING PARTNERS

Marguerite Casey Foundation
Catholic Campaign for
Human Development (Chicago)

Chicago Community Trust

Crossroads Fund

East Chicago Community
Development Foundation, Inc

The Field Foundation of Illinois

Ford Foundation

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PEOPLE POWER & POLICY IMPACT

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Lake County Center for
Independent Living

Organization of the NorthEast

TARGET Area

CCBI

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