Toward Better Outcomes For Families In Washington, DC

A Project of the Children, Youth, and Families Working Group

FEBRUARY 2005

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Introduction

Those who toil to address the needs of at-risk children and families in Washington, DC, know that the city can be a rocky field. Despite the generosity of numerous local and national foundations and the concerted efforts of outstanding service providers throughout the city, problems in the community persist and even worsen. Among the obstacles to progress: an enormous range of needs that are often seen as competing, a sense of limited resources, unclear shared priorities, duplication of services, shortfalls in capacity, limited collaboration, inconsistent leadership in local government, constraints on self-determination, and poor coordination among funding agencies. Fortunately, the local funding community has shown strong interest, fresh thinking, and a can-do approach, making it possible to work together in jumping these hurdles.

In October 2001, the Children, Youth, and Families (CYF) Working Group of the Washington Regional Association of Grantmakers initiated a series of discussions about how best to address the challenges. The group explored possibilities and interests through a survey and retreat, and ultimately decided to embark on a learning process about outcomes-based decision-making. The goal: to deepen members’ understanding of how such an approach could increase the effectiveness of local programs and services for children, youth, and families.

To fund this work, the Washington Regional Association of Grantmakers was invited and applied to the Annie E. Casey Foundation for a learning grant, originally scheduled to cover 18 months of activities. Washington Grantmakers was awarded $75,000 for this work in January 2002, identified a consulting team and project team, and began work in June 2002.
The Outcomes Project was organized as a crosscutting inquiry with members and leadership drawn from the three task forces of the CYF Working Group of Washington Grantmakers. This diversity of participation provided a richness of expertise and experience, while establishing a network for representing and engaging the larger body of the CYF Working Group.

THE CYF WORKING GROUP TASK FORCES.
The task forces of the CYF Working Group played leadership roles in the development and implementation of the Outcomes Project. The three task forces are described below:

**The East of the River Task Force** seeks to increase visibility, support and capacity for organizations within the Washington communities (Wards 7 and 8) that are located east of the Anacostia River and that have the greatest needs and fewest resources. Task force members deal with complex realities, including race, the marginalization of residents, and the need to keep these communities on the radar of national funders and investors. The members of this task force determined that the Outcomes Project could support their work by sharing data on outcomes in the targeted communities, increasing funders’ capacity to interpret and use data, and helping to prioritize outcomes.

**The Child Welfare Task Force** seeks to maximize the impact of funders in reducing the numbers of children entering into and languishing within the child welfare system of Washington, DC. Task force priorities include establishing an effective working relationship with the DC government. Members of this task force believed that the Outcomes Project could support their work by sharing data on outcomes in the targeted communities, increasing funders’ capacity to interpret and use data, and helping to prioritize outcomes.

**The Out of School Time Task Force** seeks to improve the lives of children and youth by ensuring high-quality activities during non-school hours. Task force priorities include collecting information and promoting learning about issues such as evaluation and standard setting for out-of-school-time programs. Members recognized that the Outcomes Project would support their work by increasing understanding of the use of quantitative and qualitative information to support youth development.

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**Outcomes Project Goals**

At the outset, the Project was intended to:

- Deepen funders’ understanding of outcomes and their capacity to more effectively use evaluation and data in making grant-related decisions and evaluating their investments.

- Support funders’ efforts to facilitate their grantees’ development in the use of outcomes and indicators for the purpose of increasing the effectiveness of the programs and services offered to the children, youth, and families of the District of Columbia.

- Examine and define potential common outcomes and indicators for District of Columbia children, youth, and families.

With the benefit of additional background and discussion, the team adopted a specific, and ambitious, outcome statement for the Project.
The task force also believed the project could bolster local efforts to include youth voices and perspectives in the design of out-of-school-time programs and to build the capacity of community-based organizations for research, evaluation and constituency building.

At most meetings, the Outcomes Project team—which included individuals active with each of the task forces—considered how the outcomes learning could benefit, and benefit from, the ongoing work in each of the three areas of focus. Similarly, most CYF Working Group meetings incorporated an update or discussion about the project’s progress and an outcomes perspective.

The Leadership Team. Project co-leaders (see list) and the CYF Working Group co-chairs formed the leadership. The responsibilities of the Outcomes Project leadership team included:

- Setting broad direction for the project and maintaining focus within its membership.
- Sharing the leaders’ particular experience in a way that addresses impact in the community.
- Facilitating relationship building with others who see outcomes and assessment as integral to effective grantmaking.
- Working with the consulting team to ensure project management responsive to the vision and experience of members.
- Ensuring that the project addresses important related trends and practices, especially those of strategic partners (such as Urban Institute, government agencies, and universities)
- Advocating for wise, sufficient use of resources.
- Being liaisons in communicating with the Casey Foundation and Washington Grantmakers leadership about the project.

The Outcomes Project team agreed to operate by a consensus model of decision-making, with a fallback
to majority rule if the team reached an impasse. While encouraged to maintain a two-way flow of information, the team was empowered to take action to move the project forward without additional approval or immediate review at the Working Group level.

The Task Force Co-Chairs. The co-chairs of the three CYF Working Group task forces also were engaged as partners in the project, with their responsibilities including:

- Providing guidance and empowerment to the Outcomes Project team.
- Serving as a liaison, along with Washington Grantmakers’ staff, to the association on important questions and opportunities.

The Consulting Team. Given the many competing responsibilities and professional time constraints that occupy the leaders of the Outcomes Project and the members of the three CYF Working Group task forces, participants decided to engage a consulting team to handle overall project management. The role of this team included:

- Making operational recommendations for the Outcomes Project.
- Implementing and moving the agenda forward.
- Facilitating meetings and communications.
- Supporting relationships within the working group, with Washington Grantmakers, and with strategic partners, including funders.
- Handling project administration and internal assessments.
- Ensuring a publication as the final product of the Outcomes Project.

**Children, Youth, & Families Working Group Co-Chairs:**
Rubie Coles
Carmen James Lane

**Task Force Leaders:**
**East of the River:**
Arthur McKee (through June 2003)
Rubie Coles

**Child Welfare:**
Carmen James Lane
Renette Oklewicz
(Freddie Mac Foundation)

**Out of School Time:**
Mary Mulcahy
Stacey Wions (through May 2003)
Project Activities

GETTING STARTED - EARLY 2002

Upon receiving the Casey Foundation grant, the CYF Working Group immediately got to work recruiting the Outcomes Project team, hiring a consulting firm for project facilitation, conducting a needs assessment, and identifying the steps for learning and knowledge sharing—including Working Group and Task Force meetings, as well as membership-wide trainings.

One of the first activities of the Outcomes Project team was to survey the CYF Working Group membership to assess priority issues for the project. Generating the most interest were out-of-school-time issues.

Next came a needs assessment to determine what members sought to know in order to return to their organizations and advocate for outcomes-based work. The results of the assessment showed tremendous variation in evaluation processes and practices among the grantmakers represented on the team. Key areas of difference included the use of formal vs. informal and internal vs. external evaluations.

The needs assessment also found that most of the represented funders had no formal benchmarking or assessment procedures in place. Typically, they concentrated on defining outcomes and progress in the course of considering proposals, negotiating grant terms and reviewing reports. However, some funders had no reporting requirements at all, and some were philosophically and practically committed to minimizing administrative activity in order to maximize available grant funds. This preliminary finding was a firm indication of both the need for a learning agenda on outcomes-based decision making, as well as the challenges facing the project team.

Other findings of the needs assessment included:

- Participants expressed great enthusiasm about deepening their knowledge of evaluative processes and strengthening their ability to implement them.
- A critical concern raised by some of the funders was the possibility that expanding evaluative processes could lead to undesirable results, including: strained relations between funders and grantees and an overemphasis on evaluation at the expense of other factors in selecting grantees.
- At the same time, funders recognized that evaluation has the potential to bring grantees into closer relationships with grantmakers and can help raise the level of grantee performance.
- Participants stressed the importance of understanding historical contexts in evaluating outcomes. A particular concern was the adequacy of relying exclusively on traditional scientific data gathering to capture the impact of work.

Members of the Outcomes Project team agreed from the start that the group’s “learning agenda” should integrate formal training sessions with experiential learning opportunities. In keeping with
the terms of the Casey grant, team members decided to: convene regular meetings on outcomes issues with the CYF Working Group; hold at least two training sessions on outcomes and assessment; and organize at least two learning tours to give team members an opportunity to learn about outcomes-based work in other cities.

**FOCUSING ON EVALUATION - FALL 2002**

Following an initial series of organizing and priority-setting meetings, the project team convened in September 2002 for two meetings aimed at developing concepts and terms for outcomes work. The theme of these meetings was “Evaluation: Toward a Shared Understanding.”

Presentations during the September meetings offered background on the evolution of the concept and practice of evaluation over the past several decades. The group discussed several aspects of terminology, such as:

- Defining, assessing, and adopting common language regarding evaluation.
- Speaking about signs of progress in ways that add incentives for making progress and maintaining children, youth, and families as central players.
- Identifying terms that make the process simple and clear for all groups involved.
- Examining how language helps or hinders efforts to improve the lives of children, youth, and families in Washington, DC.

To further the discussion of terminology, the meeting facilitators presented three specific frameworks for outcomes-based decision-making. These included: the W. K. Kellogg Foundation model; the Outcome Funding model of The Rensselaerville Institute (see Williams, Webb and Phillips, 1996); and the Results-Based Grantmaking model by Mark Friedman’s Fiscal Policy Studies Institute (2000) (see www.resultsaccountability.com).

Although different in scope and language, all three approaches sought to maximize the impact of funders’ dollars and deliver strategic, effective outcomes to communities. The fundamental operating principle of the September 2002 briefing and team dialogue was to find the underlying conceptual basis of each model and identify common language and concepts that work for Washington, DC.

The September 2002 meetings also provided an opportunity to plan for the project’s first training in October and to establish criteria and choose cities to visit for the project’s learning tours.

**THE FIRST TRAINING - NOVEMBER 2002**

On November 22, 2002, the CYF Working Group sponsored the first training and forum of the Outcomes Project. The program, “Outcomes-Based Grantmaking: A Tale of Two Grantmakers,” provided participants with peer-to-peer training based on the experiences of the two Outcomes Project team leaders: Tia Waller-Pryde of the Freddie Mac Foundation and Krista Bradley of the Washington Area Women’s Foundation.

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WHAT IS AN OUTCOME?
An outcome is a change, preferably positive, in the well being of an individual, an institution or a community. Outcomes look back over what has been accomplished — in contrast to goals, which look forward to what we hope to do.

Outcomes are measurable but not necessarily by quantitative indicators or statistics. For example, an outcome could be the mere presence of an ongoing collaborative structure for government, foundations and community-based nonprofits to set goals and determine progress.

WHO ARE OUTCOMES FOR?
Participants in a program should be the beneficiaries of the work, while at the community level, all citizens should reap the benefits of change.

HOW ARE OUTCOMES DESCRIBED AND TRACKED?
Targets
Many outcomes proponents believe that organizations have the greatest potential of achieving positive outcomes for children and families when clearly stated, measurable targets are in place to guide their work. Effective nonprofits have discovered that targets are uniquely valuable to increase performance. Targets are defined as tangible gain for the people served—for example, children with rising grades and/or test scores, youth entering higher education or getting good jobs, children being adopted, and so on.

Setting targets and collecting data about results is also one of the best ways to tell

THE LEARNING TOURS - EARLY 2003
The Outcomes Project entered 2003 with the experiential element of the learning agenda coming into full bloom. The goals of this part of the project were to: 1) identify other cities that are using an outcomes focus to address concerns relevant to the Washington, DC experience; and 2) arrange for members of the Outcomes Project team to visit and learn from those cities. Trips initially were scheduled for Atlanta and Boston, and a trip to Baltimore was confirmed later in the year. The team also discussed the possibility of visiting
a compelling story about an organization’s work. To further clarify targets, they are:

- **Clear commitments** — They are solid intentions that organizations establish and the funder accepts as constituting the return on its grant investment; they are not simply statements of aspiration or hope.

- **Verifiable** — They represent a change in condition or behavior that can be objectively assessed.

- **Set at a reasonable level** — They should reflect what the organization believes can be achieved even if everything does not go perfectly.

- **Set relative to a baseline** — A target of getting 40 young people into college is not meaningful until you have a sound estimate of how many of these young people would have gone to college in any event.

**Milestones**

Another key aspect of an outcome approach is the use of milestones to track progress towards the target. Milestones reflect the steps that participants must make if they are to move from their present circumstance to the target specified. Milestones shift the focus from what an implementing group does (activity focus), to what participants gain from the activities (outcome focus). These key steps of progress are often best profiled as a funnel with the last milestone being the same as the target.

By tracking milestones, organizations have a much clearer idea of their

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**Atlanta**

“One of the most compelling things I learned (in Atlanta) was how strategic you have to be in building buy-in for community-wide projects. We talked a lot about the intricate relationships that have to be built with government officials, community members, and other stakeholders from the very beginning and how important it is to balance those relationships throughout the life of the initiative. I also learned that large-scale outcomes initiatives require patience and an understanding that these projects require long-term commitment.”

“In Atlanta, we learned that the funding community there sometimes gets caught up in the traditional back-door politics of grantmaking. … The outcomes project says to funders, ‘Let’s put all of our cards on the table and see if we can find a way to win the game together.”

- Visiting team members

Atlanta was chosen as one of the learning tour sites for many reasons, including: its demographic similarity to Washington, DC; the degree of local emphasis on community-building; the city’s use of participatory models; and the availability of written documentation of outcomes. Additionally, Atlanta provided a model where collaboratives have been central to local outcomes work and where substantial learning opportunities are available to increase the capacity of organizations to set objectives and evaluate results.

Advance questions the team used to guide its Atlanta learning visit are provided in appendix C.

The two-day learning tour in January 2003 included structured panel discussions and informal conversation among the various participants from Atlanta and Washington. The focal point of the learning tour was the Georgia Family Connection Partnership (FCP). The mission of FCP is to serve as a catalyst for improving results for Georgia’s children, families, and communities. FCP is a nonprofit, public/private partnership created by the State of Georgia and funders from the private sector. The partnership assists communities in addressing the serious challenges facing Philadelphia or bringing a delegation to Washington from that city. Although there remains considerable interest in Philadelphia’s experience, most team members could not commit the additional time and energy for another trip.
Georgia’s children and families and serves as a resource to state agencies across Georgia. FCP works with a statewide network of Family Connection County Collaboratives to foster community-based support systems. FCP’s five result areas are: 1) healthy children; 2) children ready for school; 3) children succeeding in school; 4) strong families; and 5) self-sufficient families.

An impetus for establishing FCP in 1991 was a disappointing set of statistics included in the Casey Foundation’s Kids Count Data Book. As the Outcomes Project team learned during its visit, former Georgia Governor Zell Miller was jolted upon hearing that Georgia ranked below Mississippi on several key indicators of child well-being. Governor Miller returned from a multi-state gathering insisting that a sweeping change process begin.

The original public/private partnership that launched FCP included the Woodruff Foundation, Whitehead Foundation, Kirbo Foundation, Department of Human Resources, Department of Education, Department of Medical Assistance, and the former governor. The FCP collaborative started with a focus on 15 communities and has since has grown statewide.

As an intermediary organization, FCP works closely with community, state and national partners to:

- Provide training and technical assistance to meet communities’ common and unique needs and to support efforts to make better decisions locally;
- Build and maintain relationships with public and private agencies and communities to share and combine resources, promote public policy, and improve services and supports for families;
- Enhance public awareness, understanding, communication, and commitment to improve results for children and families; and
- Promote “what works” using research and evaluation practices that have proven to be effective in communities, while showcasing community successes.

The partnership receives national support from such sources as the Center for the Study of Social Policy, Annie E. Casey Foundation, and Family Support America. In addition, FCP manages the State Department of Human Resources allocation for community planning and implementation.

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OUTCOMES (continued)

progress. They then can adjust activities along the way to better hit the checkpoints needed to achieve the desired results.

In contrast to milestones, indicators are data sets about citizens that reflect how close a community is to achieving its goals. In Baltimore, for example, the community has established indicators connected to the goal of creating “a city that is safe and clean, and where city officials work effectively in neighborhoods.” These indicators include monthly service requests and response times for sanitation and housing issues.2

Because they gauge the real-world impact of a program on citizens, indicators should be chosen with great care, preferably with input from citizens themselves.

The target and milestone definitions shared here draw on the Freddie Mac Foundation’s outcomes work, which is informed by The Rensselaerville Institute model.

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FCP’s partners include the Governor’s office and State General Assembly; state agencies such as the departments of Human Resources, Education, Community Health, Juvenile Justice, Community Affairs and Labor; the state offices of School Readiness, Planning and Budget, and Educational Accountability; the Children’s Trust Fund; the Georgia Child Care Council; and private foundations. Community-based partners include: faith-based, school-based, and civic, organizations; business leaders; local elected officials; and public/private human service providers.

The role of the Family Connection County Collaboratives is to serve as the local decision-making bodies for their communities and to develop plans with strategies to improve results for children and families. The collaboratives include business and educational leaders, local elected officials, faith-based and civic organizations, public and private service providers, families, and other concerned citizens. Among the collaboratives’ responsibilities are the selection of benchmarks and the measurement of results using the five result areas. The collaboratives use a benchmark database, accessible through the Internet, to collect and analyze data.

FCP reports that its work has resulted in significant improvements in most areas of child and family well-being in Georgia. The Partnership points to evidence of a direct cause-and-effect relationship between a community’s actions and improved results, increased political support from elected officials, more inclusive community decision-making, and the ability to leverage local, state, and federal funds to support community plans to achieve results.

Observations/Learning from Atlanta

Interviews of three members of the Outcomes Project’s Atlanta Learning Visit Team were conducted to obtain their comments on the lessons for Washington, DC. They agreed on three major points:

- First, the goal of the Outcomes Project was very different from Atlanta’s Family Connection Partnership. Up to the time of our visit, the Atlanta group had been more focused on process—specifically on supporting and strengthening collaboratives to operate in every county of the state—while the Washington, DC group is looking to focus on outcomes and accountability for a concentrated population. The lesson learned is that process is important but is worth the effort only if it creates better outcomes for people—for children and youth. Indeed, the Family Connection Partnership was embarking on an intensive evaluation to document results.

- Second, the role of government is important to any community’s work toward achieving better outcomes for children, youth, and families. The bottom line: if you don’t have strong partners, including government, it’s never going to work. Members of the Outcomes Project team clearly believe that their work in Washington will never live up to its potential unless they can find real partners in the District government who are willing to change the role, priorities, and relationships the city maintains.

- Third, the Outcomes Project team had grown in a very short time into a cohesive group willing to work together toward a common goal. The learning team on this visit, for instance, refined an informal division of labor in the course of the sessions, trusting each team member to raise certain questions or follow up.
Boston

“Going to Boston showed me the potential of what could happen if Washington, DC became more savvy and more committed to using outcomes. It seemed like it was possible. Talking to other funders in DC who are resistant or just don’t see the value, it’s hard to see . . . . Going to Boston, yes, you can. There is something that can be done here.”

-Visting team member

Among Boston’s selling points as a location for a learning visit by the Outcomes Project team were: its demographic similarities to Washington, DC; its commitment to long-term change, data collection, and citizen engagement; and a huge effort to identify and define indicators of child well-being. Other considerations included the central role of The Boston Foundation in advancing citywide efforts to engage residents in an outcomes-based process.

With an energetic host, Charlotte Kahn of The Boston Foundation, the learning tour was structured as a series of discussions and a site visit to allow Washington Grantmakers to learn what in Boston’s experience may offer guidance or be adaptable to DC. As the team learned from a variety of people with whom it met—foundation staff, public officials, and community nonprofit executives—Boston’s work on improving the quality of life for families and communities began in 1997 with an effort to democratize data through a comprehensive children’s database. After recognizing that the data typically collected focused on deficits only, major local institutions including funders, city government, universities, and community-based nonprofits developed a strengths-based approach. Thus, the focus became what works, what goals are envisioned, and how to identify and make progress.

An abiding influence on current efforts was an in-depth examination of what could reverse persistent poverty, resulting in a unique document that inspired further action: “Making Our City Whole: Guiding Principles for a Social Contract,” (1994), presented by the city and the Boston Foundation—all with support from Rockefeller Foundation, which had chosen Boston as one of six cities to participate in a national anti-poverty initiative. The dialogue that was used to name challenges and find solutions was one that honored cultural identity by selecting and engaging people based both on their roles as change agents and also their ethnic/cultural identities. The principles that emerged emphasize community engagement and empowerment to “foster sustained commitment, coordination, and collaboration based on a shared vision and mutual respect.”

The insights and interest from that process helped prepare the ground for the subsequent Boston Indicators Project. With the Boston Foundation’s sponsorship from the outset, the Project began by organizing comprehensive community-building initiatives, centered on community meetings as well as support for data gathering and publications. In the process of setting their sights on what a better Boston would be like, initial meetings addressed the difficulty of measuring “intangibles.” These were defined as long-term changes that make an important difference and yet were invisible in then-prevailing data sets — for instance, building “social capital” or making progress on education but not being able to see school outcome results immediately.

On a parallel course during the project’s formation, Boston Police Department members gathered to review their work tackling a huge spike in youth violence. A ten-point coalition grew out of a tragic event where some young people went to a funeral and killed somebody else in a church. Twenty-five ministers began the coalition and worked with police, who have been supportive of
this approach. Boston has made enormous progress in reducing youth violence. The work of making change thus brought together players who could approach the problems from different vantage points but agree on whether the desired outcomes had been achieved. This example offers a useful backdrop for the larger indicators work.

The major institutions working to set goals and make changes started to get calls from people around the city who heard about the efforts, and began having monthly meetings. Almost 300 people were involved by the end of the year in the Indicators Project—a mix including community-based organizations, public agencies, residents, and federal staff from offices such as the Department of Housing and Urban Development and the Environmental Protection Agency.

Participants were discouraged from presenting themselves as “experts” initially. Instead, they organized into small groups to identify what they cared about and wanted measured that affects the quality of life children, youth, and families in Boston. This aspect of the process was important because it allowed people to think differently (as parents, neighbors) than when they were in their professional roles. Looking at indicators, specifically from the perspective of being citizens, enabled people to think intuitively and across sectors. Only after they had identified broad indicators did they break into expert groups.

One of the greatest challenges in the first round of meetings was to get involvement from the business community. That has subsequently changed and the Indicators Project is experiencing a lot more business involvement. From open-ended wish lists of 1,500 action areas, a framework of 10 sectors emerged quickly. This was a good, deep structure that required them to find data to support measuring certain conditions. They came out with draft report in June 1999 that was a result of all those people’s work and published a revised report in October of 2000.

Regarding creating change, there are five big factors that affect the Boston region: representation, cultural vitality, sprawl, education quality, and the cost of housing. Those five factors drove young people’s decisions about whether to stay or leave. Boston was surprised to find that during the 1990s, the high boom and level of immigration resulted in a net loss of young people. The Chamber of Commerce now is interested and has conducted a survey to understand why young people leave the metropolitan community, as well as to partner with universities in creating opportunity and marketing to retain young residents.

The Washington Grantmakers learning team met with several people who have played key roles in developing indicators, implementation work such as policy change, research, and funding support (list is included as Appendix A). Charlotte Kahn, who currently heads the Local Learning Partnership in Boston for the Casey Foundation’s Making Connections initiative, primarily arranged the visits. The team also met for informal dialogue over dinner with Gus Newport, formerly head of the Dudley Street Initiative, and Ruth McCambridge of The Nonprofit Quarterly, who had worked at The Boston Foundation and been active in the Persistent Poverty Project, a predecessor to the Indicators Project.

**Observations/Learning from Boston**

The team garnered a number of important lessons on the Boston learning trip. Foremost was the importance of creating a holistic framework, for instance combining attention to the economy, technology, and environment—areas that often do not make it on the same measurement screen. Other key insights:
Community leaders found it valuable to provide “nesting indicators” in order to give people a context or community decision-making. The data is sometimes only statewide, sometimes metropolitan. Where possible, it makes sense to place this information alongside data for inner core communities, Boston as a whole, and Boston neighborhoods—even the sub-neighborhood level if available.

Change efforts focused on outcomes need not—and in fact should not—wait for perfect data. The larger issue is that of understanding a community more deeply and being in a better position to strategize and act in the interest of improving that community. One may have surveys, hard data and administrative data—and some may be quite fluid—yet the information gives a sense of where city is going.

It is imperative that the community learns to use practices that create a shared sense of progress. The centrality of community engagement points to involving a wide range of institutions and individuals, and encouraging even experts in given fields to participate first and foremost as citizens.

Baltimore

“A big learning was the amount of resources and time and key stakeholders and commitment... The community engagement was critical... for community-based outcomes.”

- Visiting team member

Baltimore was included in the site visits to provide opportunities for the Outcomes Project team to witness practices that the Casey Foundation had not only fostered but actively led, with an active institutional commitment to community change in its own backyard. Other factors that made Baltimore’s experiences relevant included: demographics; the proximity to Washington, DC; and Baltimore’s extensive reliance on neighborhood groups in forging an outcomes-based program.

Hosted by the Associated Baltimore Area Grantmakers (ABAG), the Washington Grantmakers learning team met with several funders and nonprofit executives (participant list is provided as appendix A) to learn more about the Baltimore Neighborhood Indicators Alliance and its work, as well as other data gathering, goal-setting, and school reform efforts. All are initiatives that are solidly grounded in support and leadership from the Casey Foundation and are collaborative in nature.

At the heart of the Baltimore Neighborhood Indicators Alliance (BNIA) is the Vital Signs Project, a highly participatory process for local residents to identify goals and specific measures that would clarify whether, or to what extent, a goal had been met. Those indicators would stand as the agreed priorities for improving the lives of children, youth, and families.

One of Baltimore’s unique assets as it engaged in this work was an extensive network of neighborhood groups and a history of community organizing. Indeed, stakeholder groups were asked to express their support for Vital Signs by making an “organizational endorsement” for the work “as a way to measure progress towards outcomes for Baltimore City neighborhoods over time.” The endorsement acknowledged that BNIA had challenged “members of the Baltimore community with diverse interests to come together and create a common vision for the future of Baltimore neighborhoods.” It further declared that “documenting and measuring neighborhood outcomes is the most effective way to show whether Baltimore residents, neighborhood leaders,
public officials, non-profit organizations, businesses, and foundations are collectively enhancing and maintaining strong Baltimore neighborhoods,” and agreed to be “more accountable for making and acting on decisions that improve Baltimore neighborhoods.”

As we learned from the various players convened by the local grantmakers to meet with our learning team in Baltimore, despite these noble intentions and advantages, the project has had to deal with community concerns about a long history of information-gathering efforts that yielded few noticeable benefits for most people and neighborhoods. Many residents were weary of the usual process of academic, government, and business research that takes information out of the community but does not continuously involve a cross-section of residents in shaping what is being studied, how the information will be used, and what is the evaluation of impact.

The BNIA outcomes work has three major components:

- The **Vital Signs Project**, measures progress towards desired outcomes for strong and thriving neighborhoods over time;
- The **One Stop Shop** provides information about Baltimore and its neighborhoods in a user-friendly way. It is available through the BNIA office and on its website using an innovative interactive mapping tool. Access Points throughout the city are being established in order to provide greater access to more residents in places like libraries, community centers, and others;
- The **Technical Assistance and Training Strategy** offers training on accessing, understanding, and using data and indicators for neighborhood improvement.

The Baltimore project held numerous gatherings, in concert with neighborhood associations, which put the people to work sharing their observations and building a vision together. One major product was the report, *Vital Signs for Baltimore Neighborhoods: Measuring Baltimore’s Progress Toward Strong Neighborhoods And A Thriving City*. The report provides a summary of visions and goals for the indicators chosen by participants, along with actual data at the neighborhood level.

The team also learned about such initiatives as Safe and Sound, a publicly and privately funded campaign to improve Baltimore, which organizes its work around five strategies: Family Support; Reading by Nine; After School; Operation Safe Neighborhoods; and Community Action and Engagement. Blueprints for each of these strategies — the plans for getting from here to there — were created by service providers, policy makers, and academicians in these fields, based on:

- A clear goal and a set of guiding principles based on best practices;
- Rigorous accountability and management mechanisms;
- Extensive community involvement and participation;
- Standards and benchmarks to measure progress based on research, best practices, and professional experience;
- Action plans to reach the strategy goals most effectively; and
- A rollout plan to bring the work to life.

Baltimore’s outcomes work, all influenced by the citywide goals and indicators, shows how the production of community-level data—while demanding—offers information that can strengthen community change efforts. The Vital Signs report is one example of what DC might do. Earlier, the prospect of emulating this approach was considered as one that would be led by DC Agenda
and connected on a national level, to Urban Institute. As a result of the visit, funders in this community began informal conversations with these institutions, encouraging efforts to gather and share more specific neighborhood-level data with other institutions that provide infrastructure and resources for community-based nonprofits working to change conditions. Unfortunately, DC Agenda has gone out of existence, so a local vehicle for this work would need to be identified or developed, or the functions assigned to various organizations in a coalition (see www.dcagenda.org).

In Baltimore, the contribution that funders made was one of leadership. The resources and convening power of the Casey Foundation and the Associated Baltimore Area Grantmakers provided an impetus for residents to come together to set citywide goals and indicators. Funders also played a central role in the unique efforts that sprang up as residents took on the role of citizens and community builders. For instance, progressive funders—whose focus is on engaging youth to advocate for their own collective interests—aligned with a local education funders’ affinity group to focus on high school reform, in response to much of what they had heard from community residents. They formed a funding collaborative and attracted substantial new national funding from Gates Foundation—$12 million of a $20 million initiative. The high school reform effort involved lots of community meetings, an intense and difficult process of building relationships with school officials even with multiple transitions in the superintendent’s position, and actually worked to incubate an intermediary organization that could keep school reform on track and protect the resources for innovation.

**Observations/Learning from Baltimore**

In discussion following the site visit, the participants from Washington Grantmakers made these observations:

- Forming concrete goals, with funder and community involvement, has real power to galvanize people and bring in substantial new resources.
- Collaboration with government, especially the human services bureaucracy, can make for difficult relations.
- A systems-change orientation, connecting issues (such as day care, immunization, and education), and looking for the most influential levels is what lays the groundwork for change.
- A division of labor that seems to work is one where the funding community focuses on process (especially convening stakeholders) and those in other roles within the sector determine approaches likely to be most successful.

The Outcomes Project team recognized that it had a valuable vehicle in the task forces within the CYF Working Group. These provided the team with a finger on the pulse of what is going on in the city, and enabled team members to make progress on understanding issues and stakeholders.

**ADVANCING AN OUTCOMES FOCUS - MAY-JUNE 2003**

Heading into late spring in 2003, the Outcomes Project team had engaged in three learning tours and a year of dialogue, both within the team and between the team and a variety of resource persons who offered expert perspectives on outcomes issues. During a series of meetings in May and June 2003, team members sought to identify options for moving the project forward. The results of these discussions, including options for advancing an outcomes lens for local grantmaking, were presented at a June 30, 2003 meeting of the full CYF Working Group.
Outcomes Criteria and Options

The team began its presentation by introducing a set of principles (or criteria) that guided its selection of the options to present. The criteria stated that the options should be:

- Grounded in good data;
- Outcomes-oriented;
- Targeted to community “consumers” (e.g., residents, funders, nonprofits);
- Connected closely to the larger passion of grantmakers;
- Connected to community needs; and
- Focused.

The team then presented two options that were in line with these criteria and the working group discussed the strengths and challenges of each.

OPTION ONE: Create a funding collaborative using multiple strategies (e.g., advocacy, technical assistance, and grantmaking) to increase the number of slots in high-performing Out of School Time (OST) programs in Washington, DC. The number of slots would increase by a certain percentage by a specified time and/or in specific communities as an indicator of capacity to accept more children and youth.

One strength of this option was the experience, knowledge, and understanding of key stakeholders in the community (e.g., funders, nonprofits, government).

One challenge was the uncertainty of ensuring startup grants and a steady stream of funds over time.

To move forward with this option, the Outcomes Project team recommended the development of a common RFP that does not require additional dollars for grantmaking budgets.

OPTION TWO: Identify a geographic area within Wards 7 and 8 in Washington, DC and work with residents, nonprofits and strategic partners to agree on two community indicators. Funders would support organizations that develop specific targets, which would result in changes in the lives of children and families as measured by the indicators over a period of years.

One strength of this option was that the identification of neighborhood allows for everyone to participate on some level, including funders with different areas of focus and community stakeholders.

One challenge was the question of building capacity internally vs. bringing external resources into the East of the River communities.

To assess the group’s preference among the two options, the Outcomes Project team asked for a straw poll vote. The results showed a slight preference (7-5) for the out-of-school-time option among CYF Working Group members who were present; six members of the group subsequently offered to work on the proposed project.

In addition to presenting the two options, the Outcomes Project team made a recommendation at the June CYF Working Group meeting that all members of Washington Grantmakers join in supporting a collaboration started by the Washington Area Women’s Foundation that is cross-cutting and promising in terms of a results orientation.
The Women's Foundation is launching the Women and Families Financial Independence Initiative as a new regional initiative focused on breaking the cycle of poverty by building the financial independence and economic sustainability of the region’s most vulnerable families: low-income, women-headed households. The Initiative will focus on creating:

- Concrete, economic improvement for low-income women-headed families;
- Increased opportunity and effectiveness for partner organizations; and
- Dedicated resources for and increased visibility of solutions targeted to low-income single mothers and their children.

The initiative — which received its first $1 million investment from The Fannie Mae Foundation in October 2003 and another $1 million from a local philanthropist who is a single mother, and a recent $1 million appropriation from the U.S. Congress — grew out of The Women's Foundation ground-breaking study, A Portrait of Women & Girls in the Washington Metropolitan Area. The Women’s Foundation shared its learning and how it would contribute to building an initiative at the first Washington Grantmakers training that the Outcomes Project sponsored, (see page 11).

As an update, several funders involved in the Outcomes Project have since joined in the initiative or supported it informally—through such means as strategy development or sharing the model in conversations with peers—as a way to implement an outcomes orientation that was strengthened through their project participation.

CONVERSATIONS WITH KEY RESOURCE PERSONS

The Outcomes Project team met with key resource persons, drawing from the local base of experts in the short term rather than immediately bringing people in from outside the city.

Children and Youth Investment Trust Corporation

Greg Roberts, Chief Executive of the Children and Youth Investment Trust Corporation, and colleagues (including from Child Trends) spoke about their own process, starting with outcomes for its grantmaking developed between the Trust’s Board and the Mayor’s office over a three-year period. Originally, the effort was part of the Safe Passages Initiative, a plan developed to respond to a 1999 citizens summit that named child well-being as the District’s top priority. The plan is to improve well being by articulating three principles setting the conditions of well-being, five goals to determine whether or to what extent it has been achieved, and numerous objectives in the form of strategies such as health insurance enrollment, family support, after-school programs, youth entrepreneurship programs, and year-round employment opportunities.

However, as Roberts related, certain progress measures were not sustainable due to information gaps. With a target population of youth (birth-21 years of age), and focusing not strictly on academic achievement but also exploring intangibles such as self-esteem, motivation, and feelings about families and schools, the Trust worked with a firm to monitor outcomes. One major lesson learned was the need to be flexible and creative about the strategies used to achieve outcomes and the ability to change them in order to meet goals. For instance, confidentiality issues cut both ways; parents may object to young people’s being interviewed and receiving data.

The Trust invested considerable time educating people about the information needed, its uses and importance, and resolving difficulties. A major problem was the lack of capacity within
organizations to track data; such infrastructure, Roberts found, must be built over time. Building capacity is important and research can be powerful but alienating. Positive indicators needed to be identified, rather than concentrating on the negative. After all, behind the numbers are people.

The Trust’s standards work generated expressed interest in working cooperatively, based on funding; however, the standards program went into a holding pattern. A set of standards under the heading “quality of programs,” was being developed as a step toward accreditation for participating nonprofits. The developmental process has involved focus groups and research into the standards of excellence developed by the Maryland Association of Nonprofits. The plan was to refine them to fit Washington, DC and publish them once finalized, then set up an accreditation process (e.g., bronze, gold, platinum status in terms of how well an organization meets the standards). Also, financial and facilities requirements would be attached to implementation of standards for programming, fiscal status and organizational capacity. Such an ongoing process changes as the body of knowledge grows in the field of child/adolescent development.

A question was what the Trust learned about participants own desired accomplishments, how they can use the data, and what impact their own sense about the value had on data collection. Roberts noted that:

- The learning has been based on developing relationships and enhancing the ability to connect with and engage people, as well as honesty in discussing how/why data will be used as part of the educational process.
- Shifting the grantees’ thinking about outcomes was a significant portion of the educational process. It is a longer process to move thinking from “making children’s lives better” to thinking about education and what has to be measured.
- The key is to have people buy into the results using a clear message about outcomes.

**Innovation Network**
Invited guests Nancy Kopf and Patrick Corvington from Innovation Network (InnoNet), shared insights from their work providing evaluation-related technical assistance to nonprofits, including foundations and foundation-sponsored initiatives, and then brainstormed with the team about the role that funders can play in promoting community-level outcomes. This conversation led to a skill-building institute that featured InnoNet (and others) sharing about participatory evaluation.

Among the key points:

- In guiding and skill building for participatory evaluation, InnoNet philosophically works to move beyond the typical view or experience of evaluation as punitive, as focusing on deficit. InnoNet works with organizations to develop what they see as success and how they will evaluate it, including how to bring in stakeholders in the process of evaluating. They dispel the myth that participatory evaluation is not “real” research.
- Readiness to do evaluation is a critical element in working with nonprofits; they cannot do this work in the midst of crisis. There needs to be a culture of strategic thinking in place so that they can begin to articulate what they are doing and seeking to accomplish.
Examples of InnoNet’s participatory evaluation include:

- **Learning Circles Project**, which meets organizations where they are and works to integrate evaluation with other organizational capacity building—strategic planning, board development, fundraising—and uses organizational coaches as well as workshops and other training events;

- **Kids Count**, which now includes a set of tools and evaluation processes that networks in the different states can use—and recently parsed information to show conditions for children of color; and

- **Echoing Green**, working with a group of grantees who are social change advocates, providing technical assistance (TA) on the program and internal organizational capacity, refining their skill with logic modeling and data collection.

They suggested that funders, and TA providers, could be most effective by:

- Developing outcomes in concert with the nonprofits who will be doing the main work in the community, and deciding with them how to implement the outcomes.

- Encouraging development of specific, measurable outcomes that are “close-in,” that is, readily achievable. This framing can be particularly hard for social justice advocacy groups, who often are reluctant to promise results due to ever-changing political dynamics.

**SECOND MEMBERSHIP-WIDE TRAINING - SEPTEMBER 2004**

During the summer of 2003, the Outcomes Project team developed a second membership-wide training for November of that year. Alex Carter of Washington Grantmakers, in coordination with Tracy Rutnick of the Association of Baltimore Area Grantmakers, spearheaded work on the training. The training was designed to show funders how an outcomes lens can lead to better and smarter investments of grant funds.

Working Group members were encouraged to reach out in an effort to bring as many participants to the final training as possible. However, because the training was timed to coincide too closely with the annual meeting of Washington Grantmakers, it was rescheduled for September 9, 2004, and featured Mark Friedman, a seasoned consultant to funding institutions and community-based organizations, as well as a trainer of trainers. Friedman focuses on achieving results—outcomes—through strategic grantmaking, program development, and implementation. Project co-leaders Tia Waller-Pryde and Anne Mosle worked in advance to have the day long session tailored to the DC metropolitan area funding community.

This final activity reflected the project’s turn toward emphasizing integration of outcomes-based approaches throughout funding practice. The training drew a room full of funders reflecting a variety of institutions and program priorities, approximately 30 participants in all, who brought energy, curiosity, and good humor.

The entire training, as Friedman promised, was about “How do we get from talk to action in a disciplined way?” Funders play a unique role, and the point is to engage community members in creating a vision, defining success—with specific indicators—and setting a path to “turn the curve” or mark significant progress. It is also critical to pay attention to unintended effects, and to sustain change—preventing the rebound in which “we solve problems, put them aside, and they come
back.” Real progress requires collective action, he emphasized. “It is never about one agency, one program or initiative. It’s always about partnerships.”

Results are sought on one or both of two levels: population or performance (often corresponding to the community level versus the organizational). Government agencies should not be held solely responsible for, or credited with, results—any more than community-based organizations or funders are held to that level of responsibility. All stakeholders need to understand the contributions they make, and how they can get better.

Data on the current situation will be an important starting point, and a base for determining how successful the efforts are. Even so, Friedman warns, “Don’t make your work dependent on, as the first thing, collecting more data. Start by using the data you have.” Then use a results-based accountability process to grapple with the complexity of causes, agree what will indicate you are making a difference, brainstorm mostly no-cost or low-cost steps to take, and use a change-agent model that asks about both the quantity of the effort (or input) and the quality of it. Because the capacity of all the organizations and individuals involved will matter a great deal to success, outcomes work needs to involve organizational development.

Participants in the September 2004 training used the “turn the curve” exercise—designed to be simple and readily adopted in many settings—and came up with ways to address important goals such as: keeping DC teens free from the threat of violence, raising educational performance in DC’s East of the River neighborhoods (measured by high school graduation rates), and expanding support for a community-based arts center.

Fresh commitment to moving forward with this outcomes approach is already in evidence: CYF Working Group members who participated immediately resolved to use the “turn the curve” exercise at the planning retreat for 2005. Resources are available on the www.resultsaccountability.com web site (free for nonprofits, so long as proper attribution is made), including a results-based grantmaking paper (also available on the Washington Grantmakers website), presentation slides, a two-pager describing the framework, and an implementation guide. Friedman named the “two ingredients necessary to make this work successful: passion and discipline.”
Lessons Learned

“We opened some eyes to this strategy, and this type of funding. We may not have had a lot of takers, but people were definitely exposed and … challenged in their mentalities and their ways about funding.”

- Outcomes Project Participant

In addition to the broad goals identified at the beginning of this report (see page 6), the Outcomes Project team used a number of goals to identify specific outcomes it sought to achieve through its own processes. These were to:

- Learn about evaluation and outcomes by developing a solid understanding and working knowledge of other cities’ approaches to using outcomes in their communities.
- Document the learning process and findings and create a blueprint for implementing a collaborative effort toward a common outcome by producing a report on the work of the project and lessons learned.
- Develop working relationships with such institutions and sectors as the District government, DC Agenda, the Urban Institute, and the Children and Youth Investment Trust Corporation.
- Take specific action using evaluation and outcomes by getting 10 members of the CYF Working Group to agree on one measurable outcome that will improve the lives of children, youth and families in Washington, DC. This outcome will be the focus of a collaborative investment by funders and will be supported by key institutions and sectors.

This section of the report assesses the project’s success in achieving each of these goals.

LEARNING ABOUT EVALUATION AND OUTCOMES

Toward the close of the project’s main activities, the consulting team conducted a qualitative assessment based on interviews with all major participants. The focus of the interviews: How did the Outcomes Project support participants’ individual learning? And how did it influence the organizational practices of their foundations?

Ten Lessons Learned

As part of their assessment process, participants in the learning agenda process identified 10 key lessons learned from the project that may apply to similar efforts:

1. INCORPORATE KEY STAKEHOLDERS.
Participatory development of outcomes is essential and requires community-building skills, with specific emphasis on community empowerment and inclusion.

2. GAIN BUY-IN FROM THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY.
Business leaders serve as “unlikely champions” and therefore have more impact. One caveat: business representatives are usually impatient with process, and prefer to get involved at the level of implementation.

3. BUILD GRASSROOTS INFRASTRUCTURE.
The community needs to serve as project leaders, defining outcomes and identifying priorities in conversations where funders are facilitators.

4. WORK COLLABORATIVELY WITH LOCAL GOVERNMENT.
Governments represent the largest source of resources but can be large, cumbersome and rife with politics.

5. THINK SYSTEMATICALLY
Outcomes are interconnected. In choosing just one – e.g., youth development – it is important to choose indicators that reflect the larger systems that influence that outcome.
Universally, participants felt that the learning trips to other cities were valuable. Ten of the twelve interviewees said the project had supported their own learning and resulted in changes in their foundations’ practices. Of those who responded, one person emphasized the importance of expanding the learning beyond those who had participated in the Outcomes Project. Of the ten who responded favorably, four indicated they had experienced a small degree of learning and six felt they had experienced great learning.

The four indicating a limited degree said their foundations already were engaged in outcomes-based decision-making. As one of these individuals put it: “It wasn’t a question of moving from one framework to another, but making the framework we use more effective.” Another noted, “The project was more about deepening our practice.”

Others felt that, although they had not experienced great change initially, the learning agenda had opened the door to growth in the future. Referring to Boston’s youth development work and Atlanta’s neighborhood indicators, one participant said the project contributed to an understanding of “what’s possible.” This person added, “I suspect we’ll come back to that and it’s valuable because I think it’s going to guide our work over the long haul.”

Some participants spoke to the challenge of internalizing the learning. “I learned it’s not easy,” said one. “I think honestly I do approach grantmaking differently than I did. I think I ask questions differently and, in reviewing, I try to use the outcomes plan when reading a proposal and meeting with a potential grantee.”

Others saw significant changes in their own practices and in the influence they are having at their respective foundations. And still more noted the importance of sharing the team’s learning with others. “We have learned so much that’s useful to the funding community that we have an obligation to try to find a way to get that out there,” commented one participant.

Some noted the impact of the project on the task forces of Washington Grantmakers. The project, according to one participant, was successful in “putting the issue on people’s radar screens, and getting us to see the importance of being on the same page, sharing information, strategizing together. I think this was already started in the (CYF Working Group), and the Outcomes Project pushed it further along.”

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**TEN LESSONS LEARNED (continued)**

6. **MOVE FROM INDIVIDUAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL THINKING TO SYSTEMS-BASED THINKING.**
Stepping outside traditional “comfort zones” is key. In part, this means including a wide array of stakeholders—community groups, individual citizens including young people, funders, government, consultants, researchers, and other players—in discussing what outcomes should be tracked and how they should be measured.

7. **INVEST IN “SYNAPSES,” THE CONNECTING POINTS THAT DRIVE THINKING AND ACTION.**
In order to build an outcomes infrastructure, grantmakers need to invest in the capacity of nonprofits to connect their own program outcomes to community-wide outcomes.

8. **FIND GOOD DATA – AND USE IT.**
Adequate information is vital to identifying the status of any issue and to measuring change and impact. Good data also serve as a way to legitimize the issue.

9. **PAY ATTENTION TO THE POLITICS OF SHAME, BLAME, AND CREDIT.**
There will be times when groups are grasping for credit, and other times when they are eager to spread blame. The latter can be a catalyst for action; the former can sabotage progress.

10. **MAINTAIN MOMENTUM WITH SHORT-TERM SUCCESSES.**
Success on a meaningful outcome may take years. This increases the importance of identifying useful benchmarks and indicators along the way. Early success, even if small, can keep momentum going.
DOCUMENTING THE PROCESS

Throughout the process, the Outcomes Project team was attentive to documenting its process and findings through reports to the CYF Working Group and formal presentations to the larger Washington Grantmakers membership. This report is a continuation of that commitment.

Developing Relationships

Throughout the project, the team made a point of involving and remaining in dialogue with key players locally such as Greg Roberts of the Children and Youth Investment Trust Corporation, a quasi-governmental, public/private partnership. However, it became apparent during the team’s work that forging of relationships with governmental agencies and community-based organizations was more appropriately the role of a standing entity such as CYF Working Group, rather than an ad hoc group such as the Outcomes Project. Members of the Outcomes Project participated in meetings with representatives of government agencies and community organizations initiated by CYF. In the process, key relationships were initiated, inspired, or informed by a greater desire to set specific outcomes and achieve them.

Taking Action

While individual progress in learning and implementing outcomes-based strategies in funding could be counted as a success, failure to specify a collaborative project—or, at least, one that would be a next phase for the Outcomes Project itself—was a source of frustration at the end of the 18-month period. Nevertheless, many came out the project believing that it would lead to future collaborations among the participants. As one team member put it, “(The project) did improve the ability of the members to work in an outcomes-based framework… some of the fruits of this labor might not come for a while, but it is possible they will come.”

Indeed, in the months that passed since the most intensive project work, the impact has become more clear and significant. Collaborative funding has, in fact, evolved in the form of the Washington Area Women’s Foundation initiative, which the Outcomes Project recommended to members of the CYF Working Group that they join.

One of the Women’s Foundation representatives to the Outcomes Project reported: “We were fortunate that many of the partners we had a chance to work with [now support] the financial independence initiative.” She added that over half of the organizations represented on the Outcomes Project team are going to be investors, contributing substantially in terms of funds and strategic thinking.

Another participant noted the potential for collaborative action resulting from the project in Washington’s Wards 7 and 8. “The East of the River task force now has determined an outcome that they’re coming together around: they want to increase grantmaking east of the river,” this person reported.

These outcomes suggest that the team, in seeking to launch a collaborative endeavor as part of the project, may have ignored the fact that such efforts need time to evolve organically as an outgrowth of the learning agenda.
Challenges and Considerations

A very real challenge confronting the Outcomes Project was some distance between intentions and design—primarily the absence of clear authority and resources on the part of all participants to craft a specific initiative as a joint venture among foundations, and the fact that the Outcomes Project created learning opportunities. The intention was that by gaining insight and inspiration—through visits to other communities, training and other activities—locally based funders would move in the direction of changing their funding approach. The idea was that funders would become more strategic and collaborative not only with their own portfolios and relationships, but also by identifying community-level outcomes and then working together to achieve them.

That process is coming to fruition, as commitment to a results orientation ripens over time, stretching well beyond the original grant period. At the 18-month mark, a core group of funders, intensely interested in effectiveness and outcomes, had begun to explore with colleagues ways to engage a wider circle of peers and take collective action. Bolstered greatly by the second membership-wide training, that desire is taking wing. It simply took more investment of time and energy than first imagined.

One factor was that the team included people and organizations with a wide variety of roles, interests, and decision-making authority. The project team acknowledged at the outset that not all team members were institution-wide decision-maker, and adopted an intention of building enough excitement and understanding to influence the funding direction of the member funders represented. Team members could not realistically expect that their learning would translate right away into major changes in resource allocation—or in the kind of momentum that could carry changes through over a longer period of time.

Another consideration is that the intention to reach beyond the funding community and strengthen connections with other strategic institutions in the city—government and research institutions and intermediaries in particular—was in fact premature until the Children, Youth, & Families Working Group as well as other groups of the Washington Grantmakers membership worked through specific issues. Team members want funders to coalesce, set specific intentions and dedicate resources—before presenting a specific agenda to other institutions or the larger community.

The Outcomes Project survived numerous other challenges, which fortunately did not stand in the way of grantmakers adding—and deriving—value from the experience. For example:

- Several active team members, each with unique contributions that the project came to rely on, left their positions for new opportunities—including Eshauna Hicks (Moriah Fund), Stacey Wions (Diane & Norman Bernstein Foundation), and Krista Bradley (Washington Area Women’s Foundation). Washington Grantmakers also had staff transitions.

- Participants had no clear agreement about working all along to bring colleagues into the outcomes-based approach for community-wide change. And like any other, the project at times was experienced as separate from the mainstream of the association’s work.

- Finally, team members had numerous questions about how the circumstances and resources of these other communities would translate to the Washington area, realizing that these models would inform any DC area effort, but could not simply be replicated.
Key Issues
In assessing the challenges that faced the Outcomes Project—which had to be overcome for it to be infused in grantmaking—it is useful to look more closely at a few key issues:

The Politics of Territory. Like many endeavors in a capital city, the Outcomes Project was fairly politicized at the start. Any effort to move toward a multi-funder focus on community-wide outcomes—while an incredibly appealing prospect—is bound to encounter resistance or unreadiness, if only by inaction. As one person noted, successful change efforts require that “[p]eople have got to give up some of their territory. They establish their reputations, their territories, and aren’t [always] willing to share that.” Another project team member echoed this view: “To start off by saying you must collaborate to do something in Washington, DC, that’s a high hurdle. People would be scared by that.”

The Need for Clear Roles, Responsibilities. Reflecting on the challenges they faced, project participants realized the critical importance of defining the working relationships for what was a new type of project. Although early team meetings focused on clarifying and coming to consensus about roles and responsibilities, it was only by working together over time that an authentic division of labor came about.

The Role of the Project Funder. The Casey Foundation—a respected major player in funding for children, youth and families in Washington, DC, and leading member in Washington Grantmakers—made the grant, offered suggestions and resources when asked, and yet chose not to be directly involved. The intent was to ensure that whatever consensus emerged was genuinely owned by the funders involved. In reality, there were many moments spent discussing context—what direction Casey might want and what its outcome is for seeking for its funding in Washington, DC.

As one team member said, the Casey Foundation “really wanted to move local funders—and this is not a bad thing—towards doing more outcomes-based grantmaking because Washington, DC is one of the Making Connections cities, [and] to get full impact, they need local funders to buy in to significantly improving outcomes and be able to measure that for low-income families.” One participant noted a concern that the grant was not organically grown. We had not identified [an outcomes focus] as something to work on. It was more an opportunity presented to us.” The likely consequence was a longer lead time before gaining real steam for broader strategic action on outcomes.

The Role of Government. An important insight from the learning visits was the vital role of government in defining and achieving outcomes. However, in Washington – considered by many to be the ultimate government town—the Outcomes Project and the larger CYF Working Group have had real challenges involving city officials and agencies beyond piecemeal exchanges. In one participant’s view, “Because of government funding for low-income families, the need for government buy-in is significant. . . . What we learned [in other cities] is what an important role government can have if they adopt this as a way of doing business,” as both Atlanta and Boston did.
An original intent for the Outcomes Project was to connect locally based funders with other institutions in the city, including government. As key government officials came to meet with Washington Grantmakers members, the dialogues were often at the level of the Task Forces or Working Groups issuing an invitation. In retrospect, perhaps the team could have strongly invited local government to work together on an outcomes frame and agenda.

To put this dilemma in perspective, during the project’s most intensive phase, local government officials were devoted to closing budget gaps that grew after September 11, 2001, in addition to handling local crises. The bottom line, as one person put it: “We recognized that the government was not going to be a major partner for us in this, and that’s just a significant barrier.” Team members were clear that while not insurmountable, the issue is one of leadership. Regardless, the project benefited from being in conversation with key partners such as the Trust.

**The Focus on a Learning Agenda.** In assessing the design and implementation of the project, participants were reminded that learning, as powerful a spark as it can be, is not itself an engine for change. “Yes, there is something to be said for best practices and information, but that gets tired,” said a team member who confessed to a certain pessimism even while being very engaged. “You keep raking through information, and I felt like not much was going to happen.” One participant suggested that “It would have been better to choose an issue that the group would have worked on collaboratively and then try to coordinate outcomes on that issue, and make it less abstract.” Still, as some acknowledged, such an approach would have risked turning away some members who do not focus on the chosen area—or who perhaps could not envision institutionally supporting a narrowly focused effort.
Looking Ahead

Given this sort of growth in outcomes based planning, both as individual foundations and collectively as the Washington Grantmakers, it appears that there is much to expect as the fruits of this process continue to appear. To fully realize the benefits of this process the Project leadership offers the following recommendations:

- Build on the learning and the excitement generated, especially in the final training on results-based accountability, by using this framework for planning future activity.
- Renew and maintain contact with key players and resource persons in other communities that have been working with an outcomes approach for longer periods.
- Continue documenting the process, and the insights, from working together—with particular attention to the role that funders play, not only as grantmakers but also as conveners, thought leaders, as well as advocates for community members to own and direct the change that is needed.
- Make resources available to nonprofit capacity builders in various roles—including consultants, associations of nonprofits (such as Washington Council of Agencies), researchers, and policymakers as well as funders — and engage them as strategic partners, even if only to acknowledge ongoing efforts and successes.
Appendix A

HOST AND TEAM PARTICIPANTS IN LEARNING TOURS
(ATLANTA, BOSTON, BALTIMORE)

PARTICIPANTS – LEARNING VISIT TO ATLANTA
Hosted by: Family Connection Partnership
Special thanks to liaison: Paula D. Semple
Learning Team: Alex Carter, Rubie Coles, Eshauna Hicks, Tia Waller-Pryde (Brigette Rouson)

HOSTS:
Family Connection Partnership (FCP)
Gaye Smith, Executive Director
Marian Gamble, Director of State Initiatives, FCP
Ellen Whitlock, Director of Fund Development
Rita Morgan, Community Facilitator for Atlanta Region
Paula Semple, Community Facilitator
Taifa Butler, Director Public Affairs and Policy, FCP
Bobbie Cleveland, J.M Tull Foundation
Albert Wright, Board Chair, FCP; Vice President Plant Engineering, UPS
Lesley Grady, Community Foundation for Greater Atlanta
Stephanie Davis, Atlanta’s Women’s Foundation
Martin Lehfeldt, Southeastern Grantmakers
Juanita Blount-Clark, Division of Family and Children Services
Ellen Gerstein, Gwinnett Coalition for Health and Human Services
Mary Wilson, East Point Neighborhood/Communities Partnerships for Protecting Children
Doug Greenwell, The Atlanta Project (TAP), GA State University Neighborhood Collaborative
Brenan Stearns, Office of Data and Policy Analysis, Georgia Tech
Dr. Janie Frances Asante, Dekalb Initiatives for Children and Families
Jacqueline Williams, Dekalb Initiatives for Children and Families
Gloria Engleke, Atlanta/Fulton Family Connection/Community Foundation/
Earned Income Tax Credit program
Khurram S. Hassan, Impact Measurement, United Way Metro Atlanta
PARTICIPANTS – LEARNING VISIT TO BOSTON
Hosted by: The Boston Foundation
Special thanks to liaison: Charlotte Kahn
Learning Team: Alex Carter, Carmen James-Lane, Arthur McKee, Mary Mulcahy
(Catalina Vallejos Bartlett)

HOSTS:
Foundation and Community Sites
Geeta Pradhan, The Boston Foundation
Daria Fanelli, City of Boston Centers for Youth and Families
Margaret Blood, Strategies for Children
Bill Walczak, Codman Square Health Clinic
Candy Gartley, Codman Square Health Clinic
Don Buckholtz, United Way
Richard Ward, The Boston Foundation (After School Programs)
Gus Newport, Consultant, formerly of Dudley Street Initiative
Ruth McCambridge, The Nonprofit Quarterly, formerly of The Boston Foundation

PARTICIPANTS – LEARNING VISIT TO BALTIMORE
Hosted by: Association of Baltimore Area Grantmakers
Special thanks to liaison: Tracy Rutnick
Learning Team: Alex Carter, Julie Farkas, Tia Waller-Pryde
(Catalina Vallejos Bartlett, Brigitte Rouson)

HOSTS:
Betsy S. Nelson, Executive Director, Association of Baltimore Area Grantmakers (ABAG)
Tracey Rutnik, Director of the Funders Evaluation Initiative of ABAG
Odette Ramos, Director, Baltimore Neighborhood Indicators Alliance
Martha Holleman, Safe and Sound (a publicly and privately funded campaign to improve Baltimore)
Lara Hall, Blaustein Philanthropic Group, member of the Maryland Service Funding Collaborative and the Baltimore Neighborhood Collaborative
Jane Sundius, Open Society Institute, Chair of the Education Funders Affinity Group
Ann Sherrill, Director, Baltimore Neighborhood Collaborative
Appendix B

MARK FRIEDMAN CHANGE MODEL FOR RESULTS-BASED GRANTMAKING

PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY FOR PROGRAMS, AGENCIES AND SERVICE SYSTEMS

- Who are our customers, clients, people we serve? (e.g. children in a mentoring program)
- How can we measure if our clients/customers are better off? (performance measures about client results - e.g. rate of high school graduation for mentees)
- How can we measure if we are delivering service well? (performance measures about service delivery - e.g. ratio of mentors to mentees)
- How are we doing on the most important of these measures? Where have we been; where are we headed? (baselines and story behind the baselines)
- Who are the partners who have a potential role to play in doing better?
- What works, what could work, to do better than baseline? (best practices, best hunches; incl. partners’ contribution)
- What do we propose to do? (multi-year action plan and budget; incl. no-cost/low-cost items)
A SIMPLIFIED VIEW OF PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY FOR PROGRAMS, AGENCIES AND SERVICE SYSTEMS

Answer these questions (every week, month, quarter or year):

- Who are our customers (customer population)?
- How can we measure if our customers are better off (customer results)?
- How can we measure if we're delivering service well?
- How are we doing on the most important of these measures (baselines and the story behind the baselines)?
- Who are the partners who have a role to play in doing better?
- What works to do better?
- What do we propose to do?

Put It In this Format

Program: Road Maintenance

Mission or Purpose of the Program

Performance Measure Baselines

Story behind the baselines

What will be done to improve performance in the next two years.

OPTIONAL APPENDICES

A. Data Development Agenda
B. Information and Research Agenda
   (about causes & what works)
C. Secondary Measures detail
D. Partners detail
E. Current actions (that are working)
F. Proposed next year detail
G. 2 to 10 Year agenda detail

Link to Budget
A SIMPLIFIED VIEW OF RESULTS BASED GRANTMAKING FOR FOUNDATIONS AND OTHER FUNDERS

Answer these questions (every week, month, quarter or year):

■ What conditions of well-being do we hope to affect for the better (results)?
■ How would we recognize those conditions in measureable terms (indicators)?
■ For the places we are considering helping, how are they doing on these measures (baselines)?
■ What is the story behind the baselines?
■ Who are the partners who have a potential role to play in doing better?
■ What would it take to turn the curves? What strategy should the community (city, county, state) as a whole pursue to make this happen?
■ What is our role in that larger strategy?

Put It In this Format

Result: Children live in safe and loving families
Indicator Baselines (and/or Service System Performance baselines)

Story behind the baselines
What would it take (what complete strategy is required) to turn the curves?
Our role in this larger strategy

OPTIONAL APPENDICES
A. Data Development Agenda
B. Information and Research Agenda (about causes & what works)
C. Secondary Measures detail
D. Partners detail (current & potential)
E. Current actions (that are working)
F. Proposed next year detail
G. 2 to 10 Year agenda detail
# A Tool for Choosing a Common Language

(and constructing a meaningful glossary)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Framework Idea</th>
<th>Common Labels for each idea (Each line represents a separate choice.)</th>
<th>Modifiers - if you must (and some notes)</th>
<th>Chosen Word or Phrase PICK ONE!! (Each word or phrase can be used only once.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Result</td>
<td>Population</td>
<td>1.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Outcome</td>
<td>Total population</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Goal</td>
<td>Whole population</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vision</td>
<td>Community-wide (for 'client results' see D3 below)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. A condition of well being for children, adults, families or communities (stated in plain language).</td>
<td>Indicator</td>
<td>Strategy</td>
<td>2.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. A measure that helps quantify the achievement of a result.</td>
<td>Benchmark</td>
<td>Program</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. A coherent set of actions that has a reasoned chance of working (to improve results).</td>
<td>Strategy</td>
<td>Agency</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. A measure of how well a program, agency or service system service is working.</td>
<td>Performance measure</td>
<td>System</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Performance indicator</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Other Important Ideas - Part 1</td>
<td>vision</td>
<td>often contains one or more results.</td>
<td>1.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. A picture of a desired future, one that is hard but possible to attain.</td>
<td>desired future</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The purpose of an organization.</td>
<td>mission</td>
<td>current potential</td>
<td>2.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. A person or organization who benefits from program or agency service delivery.</td>
<td>purpose</td>
<td>research based asset based realistic arbitrary insane</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. A person or organization who has a significant interest in the performance of a program, agency or service system.</td>
<td>customer</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>client</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>stakeholder</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>constituent</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. A person or organization who has a role to play in improving results</td>
<td>partner</td>
<td></td>
<td>5.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. A visual display of the history (where we've been) and forecast(s) (where we're headed) for a measure.</td>
<td>baseline</td>
<td></td>
<td>6.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. An analysis of the conditions, causes and forces at work which help explain why a baseline looks the way it does.</td>
<td>trendline</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Possible actions that could make a difference on a result or performance measure.</td>
<td>story behind the baseline</td>
<td>what works options strategy</td>
<td>7.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>strategic plan</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>strategy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. The components of an action or strategic plan.</td>
<td>planned accomplishments</td>
<td>goals and objectives</td>
<td>10.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. A description of the funding of existing and/or proposed actions.</td>
<td>budget</td>
<td></td>
<td>11.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>funding plan</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. A document that describes what new data is needed or where existing data needs to be improved.</td>
<td>data development agenda</td>
<td></td>
<td>12.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. A document that describes what new information is needed about causes, conditions, and/or what works to improve results.</td>
<td>information and research agenda</td>
<td></td>
<td>13.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. A desired level of achievement for an indicator or performance measure</td>
<td>target</td>
<td>goal standard</td>
<td>14.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Framework Idea</td>
<td>Common Labels for each idea</td>
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<tr>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>----------------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Other Important Ideas - Part 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. A description of why we think an action or set of actions will work.</td>
<td>Theory of change Logic model</td>
<td>Used at both the population and performance levels.</td>
<td>1.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. A structured, disciplined analysis of how well a program is working or has worked.</td>
<td>Program Evaluation</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. A system or process for holding people in a geographic area responsible for the well-being of the total population or some defined subpopulation.</td>
<td>Results Accountability Outcome Accountability Results-based Accountability Outcome-based Accountability</td>
<td>&quot;Results Accountability&quot; is sometimes used to describe all of 3 thru 7 combined.</td>
<td>3.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. A system or process for holding managers and workers responsible for the performance of their programs, agencies and/or service systems</td>
<td>Performance Accountability program agency service system</td>
<td></td>
<td>4.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. A system or process of working from ends to means, using (population and/or program) results to drive decisions about what to do.</td>
<td>Results-based decision making Outcome-based decision making</td>
<td></td>
<td>5.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. A system or process of working from ends to means, using (population and/or program) results to drive the budget.</td>
<td>Results-based budgeting Outcome-based budgeting</td>
<td></td>
<td>6.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. A system or process of working from ends to means, using (population and/or program) results to drive grantmaking decisions.</td>
<td>Results-based grant making Outcome-based grant making</td>
<td></td>
<td>7.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>D. Types of (or ways to categorize) Performance Measures</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Measures of the quantity or amount of effort, how hard did we try to deliver service, how much service was delivered.</td>
<td>How much did we do? input output resources process measure product measure</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Measures of the quality of effort, how well the service delivery and support functions were performed.</td>
<td>How well did we do it? efficiency measure unit cost staffing ratios staff turnover staff morale access waiting time &amp; waiting lists worker safety customer satisfaction process measure</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Measures of the quantity and quality of effect on customer’s lives.</td>
<td>Is anyone better off? customer outcome measure customer result measure impact measure effectiveness measure cost benefit ratio return on investment value added customer satisfaction output outcome product measure</td>
<td>program or client program or client</td>
<td>3.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>E. A BASKETFUL OF MODIFIERS to use with any of the above...</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Measurable Positive Urgent Negative Priority Short term Targeted Intermediate Incremental Long term Systemic Powdered Core Granulated Qualitative Homogenized</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SAMPLE LEARNING QUESTIONS

LEARNING AGENDA: ATLANTA
The Outcomes Project team developed these inquiries to guide its first learning visit and inform others.

Following are questions that have emerged to focus our information gathering and connections, as a process to advance the Project outcome: engaging a critical mass of funders here—at least 10—in pursuing a common outcome.

A. HISTORY & OVERVIEW
What is the history, framework, and basic information about the outcomes work in Georgia and particularly in Atlanta?
What templates or experiences elsewhere did the Family Connection Partnership build on?
How is the collaborative process working, with emphasis on Atlanta? What are strengths, weaknesses, learnings?
What was expected? What might we expect with a similar process?
What was unanticipated (surprises)? Where did you run into trouble?
What would you do differently if you started over?

B. PLAYERS & EVOLUTION
What kind of power does it take to get an effort like this off the ground?
What kind of power did people at the ground level have and how did they affect the level and kind of resources coming to them?
Where are the leverage points?
How does the process for the city of Atlanta relate to the state of Georgia’s process?
What is the role of government at the state and local levels, and in particular what has been the level, purpose, and process for getting state funds?
Who are the communities/populations/grantees that you were working with?
Who are the partners? How were they identified and linked? How did they work together?
What specifically was the role of funders and how did it evolve?
What did it take to get the different players involved? What did it take to get funders on board? What more, if anything, is being done to expand the base of foundations involved?

C. PROCESS-IDENTIFYING OUTCOMES

What was the process/methodology used to identify outcomes (benchmarks)?

What needs to happen to engage key stakeholders in that process?

What are parameters for defining the scope of outcomes indicators and assessment?

D. PROCESS-IMPLEMENTING & ASSESSING

What mechanisms were in place to achieve success?

How have the evaluation training, coaching and online resources affected progress?

What were obstacles to implementation?

How did Atlanta deal with results that missed the mark?

E. LEARNING & APPLICATION

On further reflection, what were the main lessons learned?

What do you now see that you want to learn more about?

What processes did you find were most important?

Were you funded to learn and to plan before starting the outcomes work?

Is the Washington Grantmakers process more the exception than the rule?