



TIES THAT BIND:

The Practice of Social Networks

IN A SERIES OF REPORTS ON
SOCIAL NETWORKS FROM
THE ANNIE E. CASEY FOUNDATION

NUMBER TWO

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About the Annie E. Casey Foundation

The Annie E. Casey Foundation is a private charitable organization dedicated to helping build better futures for disadvantaged children in the United States. It was established in 1948 by Jim Casey, one of the founders of UPS, and his siblings, who named the Foundation in honor of their mother. The primary mission of the Foundation is to foster public policies, human-service reforms, and community supports that more effectively meet the needs of today's vulnerable children and families. In pursuit of this goal, the Foundation makes grants that help states, cities, and neighborhoods fashion more innovative, cost-effective responses to these needs. For more information and a copy of this report, visit the Foundation's website at www.aecf.org.

TIES THAT BIND:

The Practice of Social Networks

**SECOND IN A SERIES OF REPORTS
ON SOCIAL NETWORKS FROM
THE ANNIE E. CASEY FOUNDATION**

by Terri J. Bailey
The Piton Foundation

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Thanks to the many families and organizations who allowed us glimpses into their lives and work. Thanks also to Elena Pell, who accompanied us on our trips to some of the social network strengthening intermediaries; enriched our team thinking and planning; and authored a companion piece, entitled *Relationships Matter: How Agencies Can Support Family and Social Network Development*, that focuses on resident/family perspectives about the social networks in their lives.

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FRAMING SOCIAL NETWORKS

The Foundation's Social Network portfolio began in early 2004 with the development of a framework and approach for the "third leg of the triumvirate stool" for the *Making Connections** theory: social networks. The three-legged stool represents the three opportunity strands—connections to economic opportunities, strong social networks, and quality services and support—that families must have to realize well-being and successful outcomes. These opportunity strands are at the heart of the Foundation's *Making Connections* initiative.

Cultivating strong social networks was a new area of focus for the Casey Foundation. The development process began with an exploration of existing literature on the subject. After reviewing the literature, it became clear that there was a need to better understand good practice and the social network experiences of families from their points of view. Thus, a consultative session was held in May 2004. The Social Network Team, formed during the planning and implementation of the consultative session, learned much from the participants—a mix of practitioners, resident leaders in the *Making Connections* sites, and researchers. Essentially, the message to the team was to "go carefully into the social ecologies of communities and learn."

A product of this early phase of research is a paper that I wrote, entitled **Tapping the Power of Social Networks**. This paper compiles relevant definitions, key findings from the literature and their limitations when applied to practice and measurement, and the understanding we came to about a potential niche for the Foundation in strengthening positive social networks in the context of the *Making Connections* work in the sites.

The next phase was to learn about and explore successful practices of intermediary organizations already working with families like those who live in our *Making Connections* neighborhoods. Based on a scan of promising approaches across the country and advice from the consultative session participants, we selected six organizations to visit and learn from: Beyond Welfare in Ames, IA; Community Organizing Families Initiative in Chicago, IL; Family Independence Initiative in Oakland, CA; Grace Hill Settlement House in St. Louis, MO; Lawrence Community Works in Lawrence, MA; and La Union de Pueblo Entero (LUPE) in San Juan, TX. These visits included observations, document reviews, interviews, and focus groups with key staff and families involved with these organizations. A second paper, written by Terri Bailey, entitled **The Ties That Bind**, summarizes our findings from these visits, and helps lay the groundwork for the development of a social networks point of view for the Foundation's practice and measurement work in *Making Connections* sites. A third paper, written by Elena Pell, entitled **Relationships Matter: How Agencies Can Support Family and Social Network Development**, focuses specifically on the discussions with the participating families and their experiences in social networks.

**Making Connections* is a ten-year community change initiative by the Annie E. Casey Foundation that seeks to improve child and family outcomes. To learn more about *Making Connections*, please visit www.aecf.org.

Being very clear about the importance of the link between strong, positive social networks and the achievement of successful, tangible outcomes for families, the Social Network Team began to explore how to incorporate a social networks approach into the results-oriented work of the Foundation. We are particularly focused on the core results of *Making Connections* in the areas of Family Economic Success (FES) and ensuring that children are healthy and prepared to succeed in school (CHAPSS). We began with FES, following the history of this work in the *Making Connections* sites, which resulted in a fourth paper, written by Nilofer Ahsan, entitled **Social Networks Make a Difference: Family Economic Success**. This paper describes examples of concrete opportunities where a social networks approach can bolster the scope, scale, and/or sustainability of FES results. It also contains some key insights about engaging families who are most vulnerable, such as those families with members who are formerly incarcerated, or with members who are dealing with mental health or substance abuse challenges, or immigrant families, and supporting the “success trajectories” of these families individually and collectively.

The fifth and final paper, entitled **Measuring Social Networks: Tools for Mapping and Evaluating Their Development**, written by David Chavis and Mary Hyde, provides an overview of the tools for mapping, measuring, and evaluating the development of robust social networks and their association with the improvement of key outcomes for residents and families. This guidebook can be used by practitioners and residents who live and work in the *Making Connections* sites. It provides hands-on tools for mapping and measuring social networks and the development of key elements within these networks, and for measuring effects at various levels of analysis: individual, group, organizational, or whole network.

The objective of the papers in this series is to tell the story of the social network development here at the Casey Foundation, as well as to share these lessons—gathered from practitioners, residents, and families—with the larger field. It is our hope that as you review these five papers you are able to understand the positive impact of social networks on improving the lives of children, families, and communities. Social networks can be so powerful in the lives of the most disadvantaged families. Therefore, it is important to focus on them and create opportunities where they can be supported and sustained. Indeed, it is clear that attention to strengthening these networks is a key ingredient in realizing the aspiration of transforming neighborhoods. We hope these papers help to provide some ideas, strategies, and tools for supporting positive social networks in your work. Please feel free to send us your comments. Comments may be sent to me at ajordan@aecf.org, or Bahia Akerele at bakerele@aecf.org.

Audrey Jordan
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Children do well when their families do well, and families do better when they live in supportive neighborhoods. That is the simple premise behind the Annie E. Casey Foundation's¹ *Making Connections* initiative, a multifaceted effort to improve the life chances of vulnerable children by helping to strengthen their families and neighborhoods.

Making Connections is about strengthening families by connecting them to the opportunities, resources, and support they need to rear happy, healthy, confident, and successful children. Three kinds of connections were identified by the Foundation as most critical:

Economic Opportunities—connecting people to informational networks that increase their pathways to local and regional labor markets, their access to affordable goods and services, and their ability to accumulate savings and assets.

Services and Supports—connecting people to accessible, affordable, family-centered, and culturally appropriate forms of help that provide preventive and ongoing support.

Social Networks—connecting families to networks of friends, neighbors, kin, community organizations, role models, mentors, faith-based institutions, and other positive social relationships that encourage and provide neighbor-to-neighbor support and mutual aid and make people feel less isolated and alone.

The purpose of this paper is to explore the latter, the role of social networks in achieving meaningful results for children and families in and beyond the *Making Connections* initiative.

WHY SOCIAL NETWORKS MATTER

“You will never have all the resources you will ever need. You will never be able to do all the things you want to do without the people. With the people you can do enormous things.”

Social network theory and literature may define social networks differently but a simple read of the dictionary helps answer the question, why do social networks matter? Webster's offers us the following definitions:

- Social—“tending to form cooperative and interdependent relationships”;
- Net—“an open meshed fabric woven together at regular intervals”; and
- Work—“sustained effort to overcome obstacles and achieve an objective or result.”

From this we understand that a social network is: a sustained effort to build and support the cooperative and interdependent relationships in a community, woven together but open to allow for ease of access and freedom of movement, that are necessary to achieve results.

In comprehensive neighborhood change initiatives like *Making Connections*, understanding the role of social networks in achieving results and learning how to build and support strong and sustainable networks are important for a variety of reasons.

- People are motivated and influenced by those with whom they are in personal relationships. These attachments give people more choices and encourage them to take risks and set goals they might not otherwise dream of or be able to achieve on their own. They enable them to connect to much more diverse networks of individuals and families providing access to new information and new opportunities.
- We have become increasingly reliant on a service delivery model to meet the needs of children and families. But there are serious limitations in any service delivery system's ability to meet these needs, particularly for the most vulnerable members of a community. Service delivery systems are detached from meaningful relationships with communities by the professional nature of their services and the hierarchical structure of the organizations. They are often driven more by their sources of funding than by the consumers of their services. While social networks are not an alternative for the services families need, they play a critical role in addressing the issues that services cannot address, or in some instances, the issues that the service delivery system itself creates— isolation, powerlessness, and the loss of self-image and self-worth.
- There is a chronic disengagement from civic life in America that places poor families at a distinct disadvantage in advocating, or finding allies to help them advocate, for the things they need to improve conditions for themselves and their communities. For the large numbers of poor and disenfranchised in communities across the country—children, immigrants, disconnected youth, and others—this disengagement can spell disaster.

EXPLORATORY PROCESS

“If we always do what we’ve always done, we’ll always get what we’ve always got.”

In early 2004, the Foundation asked Senior Associate Audrey Jordan to explore the potential and relevance of social networks to the Foundation's efforts. Jordan convened a team of people to help in the exploration. The Social Network Team embarked on a number of activities throughout 2004 and 2005 culminating in this report.

To begin the process, Jordan researched and wrote *Tapping the Power of Social Networks*, an overview of the ways social networks are thought of generally and in the context of *Making Connections*. In May 2004, Casey hosted a consultative session of residents of *Making Connections* neighborhoods, practitioners, scholars, and Foundation staff.

Though a helpful and worthwhile beginning, the process left many gaps in our understanding of how social networks operate in community change initiatives and how the practice of social networks might inform an emerging point of view for *Making Connections*. To advance learning and inform practice, expert knowledge needs to be blended with community knowledge. A great deal of expertise and knowledge about social networks resides not in journals and other publications but in communities themselves.

To capture this lived experience, the Social Network Team conducted site visits in 2004 and 2005 to six organizations engaged in building and strengthening social networks in their communities: Beyond Welfare in Ames, Iowa; Community Organizing and Family Issues in Chicago, Illinois; Family Independence Initiative in Oakland, California; Grace Hill Settlement House in St. Louis, Missouri;² Lawrence Community Works in Lawrence, Massachusetts; and LUPE in South Texas.³

Social networks occur naturally and constantly, for example, through work, or church, or our children's activities. But the programs we visited were all intentionally constructed networks established for some particular cause like rebuilding a community or eradicating poverty. They are staffed. They have resources, albeit insufficient. And they all grew out of unique local circumstances and the vision of local leaders.

But even though each organization's mission and activities are specifically tailored to meet the needs of its community, the site visits made clear that the successful social networks supported by these organizations have many common elements and strategies. These shared attributes and their relevance for the Foundation's *Making Connections* initiative are the focus of this paper.

We were privileged to have the opportunity to engage in rich conversations with the staff, families, and partner organizations engaged in the practice of social networks. From them we learned many things that will help guide our work. So that you, too, may benefit from their wisdom, their words are interspersed throughout this report.

In appreciation to the individuals and families who have shared their stories with us in this report, we have not used their names, so as not to identify them.

LINES THAT DIVIDE

Social networks enable people to work together to solve common problems and achieve shared goals, to, in effect, draw on the resources contained by other members of the network. In social network theory, there are three types of social capital that are important to this discussion.

Bonding social capital refers to links with people most like you, social connections that build on similarity, informality, and intimacy. Research suggests that this form of social capital helps you to “get by” in times of need.

Bridging social capital refers to links between people or groups with other people or resources that they might not otherwise have come in contact with, people from other ethnic or cultural groups or living beyond the borders of the community for example. This expands access to resources, such as education, employment, and training opportunities that help people in disadvantaged communities to “get ahead.”⁵

Linking social capital refers to alliances with individuals in positions of power over resources required for economic and social development. Where bridging social capital, as the metaphor suggests, is essentially horizontal (that is, connecting people with more or less equal social standing), linking social capital is more vertical, connecting people to key political and other resources and economic institutions across power differentials.

Economically poor communities often have significant amounts of bonding social capital and may form intra-community bridging capital (ties within the local community). But most poor communities have insufficient inter-community bridging capital (ties across the borders of local communities) and little or no linking social capital.

Importantly, it is not the mere presence of or connections to powerful people and institutions that constitutes linking social capital, but rather the nature and extent of these relationships.⁶

“What we call a community of conscience is where everybody at various levels of economics understands the community is all connected, that it’s not us and them. And one of the things that we have not done and we have realized recently is that there is a whole element of people that would connect to us if we just provide that opportunity...”

HABITS OF DETACHMENT

“If you’re doing something and no one ever says to you, ‘Do you want to do something different?’ Do you think they’re talking this way down at DHS? No. They’re busy harassing people and taking their children.”

Over time the relationships between community members and “helping” professionals and people in positions of power over resources have too often become detached. Eventually, this detachment becomes habitual.

There are many factors that have combined to create these “habits of detachment”:

- Overreliance on structure and rules. *“The other organizations specifically tell you what to do—too many rules, too much oppression, and once you wanted to branch out on your own, once you thought you were prepared, they would stop you completely.”*
- Distant, one-sided relationships between “experts” and “clients.” These professional relationships reinforce dependency, on the one hand, and assert dominance on the other. *“What these agencies need to know is that people need to be treated with respect and care and like they can make decisions for themselves.”*
- Excuses or blame when things don’t work. *“Seeing and believing is on both sides. Foundation people, agencies, they don’t believe. There are only a small number of people who work in those areas who actually believe that people like us can change our lives around.”*
- Caring more for the organization’s survival than for its mission. *“I believe other organizations are in it for themselves, not for community. You can tell because of a lot of self-promotion.”*
- Categorical programs that make the person fit the service rather than the service fit the person, or better yet, fit the family. *“A lot of us have the experience of going in and applying for food stamps and other things and they look down their nose at you. That sets us back. We’ve already been degraded. It makes it hard to ask for help.”*
- Inability or refusal to trust. *“People have sometimes gotten used to things just getting done for them, or used to the idea that people with money will just do what they want to do. And they believe that what they think doesn’t matter. You just have to help people see, maybe one-to-one, that they have some control, especially as a collective. People just have to get this belief, this hope that they can make a difference. Some don’t have it because their experience says otherwise.”*
- Working the system. *“We’ve been masterminds at engineering the system; we may seem sometimes like we are trying to manipulate them. Habits.”*

We’ve come to take these habits of detachment for granted. This is just how things work. But imagine the alternative: intentionally countering and replacing these deeply engrained habits of detachment with habits of attachment fostered by social networks. These networks encourage personal and reciprocal relationships, foster the expectation that problems can be solved if we just all put our heads together, facilitate interactions that communicate the value and worth of the individual, and enable genuine relationships to form that cross race, culture, and class lines.

CROSSING CLASS LINES

“Relationship is kept at a professional level and never passed on... Social networks often look at internal connections, but it is these bridging connections that are much more important.”

Communities with high concentrations of poor people remain poor if they have few connections to the powerful within or outside the community. Their already limited stores of capital (physical, financial, and human) become sapped, and access to new information and innovation is discouraged.

This is an important lesson for the *Making Connections* initiative. If all this effort does is connect poor people to more poor people, it becomes a trap. Perhaps a friendlier and more supportive trap, but a trap none the less.

We contend that it is not enough to just help people get by, or to make the conditions of poverty a little more palatable. *Making Connections* strives to help people get ahead, and this requires links to people and organizations who bring different and often more powerful connections and resources to the network. It requires intentional efforts to cross class lines to build personal relationships with people who are not poor who in turn open doors and create connections with their own personal and professional networks.

Beyond Welfare (BW) is perhaps most strategic about crossing class lines. It is an intrinsic part of the organization’s mission and vision. BW uses a term for these individuals of different classes. They are called “allies.”

Allies do not necessarily come with the education or awareness they need to enter into supportive and reciprocal relationships with people of less means. They often need to explore their own biases and confront their own privilege.

“Being self-aware, this is retrospective learning for me. I have had to learn some things about people I haven’t had to deal with before. ... And many people in upper classes don’t. I became much more aware of my class status, how I got to it, and how I feel about it relative to others.”

They may also need a network of their own for support and to encourage continuous growth.

“I am more aware we need to nurture the new allies. Because when they look around the room, even with training, it is overwhelming.”

Even with training and support, not everyone can be an ally. It is a matter of opportunity, ability, and willingness to see past old stereotypes.

“Allies get lots of training, but even then some of them come in to fix people. They learn real quick that that won’t work.”

“Some allies have been trained and admitted that they just weren’t ready for this.”

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On the surface, allies give more than they get. But to think that the relationships are any less reciprocal or of any less value to the allies than to the participants would be a mistake.

“Allies talk about this. They had a lot of money but did not have a sense of meaning or purpose. All my friends look like me, acted like me, want the same thing as me, had the same music and foods. I have all kinds of friends in my life now. My life is richer now. It is about all, everyone having a richer life. It’s not just about poor people having a better life.”

There are many examples of people reaching out to their broader network to help and to use their influence. This is the power of linking social capital.

“I have come to see injustice and the reality of the underclass. I take this learning with me to my church... Everyone who knows me—in my social circles—knows about BW, so there is a multiplier effect. And then some of us get together and serve as advocates in changing practice and policy.”

WHAT CHARACTERIZES A VIBRANT AND HEALTHY SOCIAL NETWORK?

THE NETWORK IS DEMAND-DRIVEN

“The major difference is that LUPE doesn’t have clients, LUPE has members. So in that sense, the people own LUPE, as opposed to LUPE providing service.”

Practitioners contend that to be successful, we must change the environment in which social networks exist from supply-side to demand-driven, an approach in which choices are self-determined and self-regulated by network members, not pre-decided or designed by professionals. New choices constantly emerge as network members themselves begin to shape the network offerings.

This exchange between a resident and the discussion facilitator during the Lawrence site visit is illustrative. The resident suggested that other cities trying to build strong social networks should: *“Hold onto what works and if it doesn’t work, don’t stick with it. Make changes.”* The facilitator asked how you would know. The resident replied: *“Set goals and watch to see progress. If you make progress, it’s working. If you don’t, it’s not.”* The facilitator then asked who decides if it works? *“The people would decide.”*

Social network organizations have to hold back to allow the network to emerge from its members. A staff person we spoke with told a story about letting go of a program she had created to make room for something else the members wanted. *“The lesson was [about having] the strength to say something isn’t working, the willingness to let go of something that we had put a lot of energy into. It gave us the discipline we needed.”*

Participants see and appreciate the difference between the kinds of organizations we visited and other organizations in their experience. *“Other organizations begin with an idea, then two years later they change their purpose. Why? Because they have their own agenda... [They] work for the good of people at first, but then they change their goals. LCW is different. It is totally about what the community wants. And there is not just one goal, but many goals of the community.”*

FORM FOLLOWS FUNCTION

“Don’t get locked into things you can’t change. And don’t get locked into protocols, procedures, elections, or offices. Just do it. Do what you need to get the work done. Be flexible.”

Social networks that develop an organizational structure in response to self-determined needs or processes are more open and adaptive. Ultimately, it all boils down to flexibility and adaptability.

The Family Independence Initiative (FII) told a story about an early affinity group that tried to put form before function. *“The one affinity group that never held together was tied together by bylaws where others were tied through personal relations. Bylaws are a way to avoid trust or express the fact that you don’t trust. They’re used as a proxy for trust but they really undercut trust. It pretends there’s a substitute for building relationships.”*

THE NETWORK IS CONSTANTLY EXPANDING

“We have to communicate with people outside of the network to motivate our neighbors and get them involved, too. To help them see what is happening here. We bring them where the good is. And that is important. That’s how we build it.”

People naturally reach out to others in their extended personal networks to share a good thing. Social network strategists can help the ripple effect by recognizing that the first and best recruiters for the network are its members.

Lawrence Community Works’ Neighbor Circle strategy is an example. Under the leadership of a resident host and a trained facilitator, 8 to 10 families come together three times over the course of a month for dinner and conversation. They get to know each other, talk about the neighborhood or the city, and decide as a group if there is something that they can do together to help build community. Initially facilitated by staff, Neighbor Circles are now led by network members who have stepped into the role of Neighbor Circle facilitators. A resident facilitator commented: *“It’s like a chain letter. I’ve brought in several friends.”* Another added: *“I brought a friend. They brought two more friends I didn’t know. That’s what we want.”*

Over time, networks can become quite large. As social networks expand, it becomes necessary to manage and adapt to growth in different ways in order to maintain a healthy network and avoid having to restrict membership.

“At every iteration we are reinventing. Job descriptions change all the time. There are three considerations to be able to grow with the network:

- 1. Build systems along the way to allow us to do routine things in a routine way (orientation, website, databases).*
- 2. Transfer as much to leaders and members as we can... Recycle learning so we don’t always have to go to staff.*
- 3. Ability and willingness to discard anything quickly so we can do something else.”*

This can be very hard. BW, for example, is at a crossroads in its growth. Its members see it.

“People can get overlooked or ignored when you have so many people. If you have a smaller group that kind of thing is less likely.”

The struggle for organizations like BW is to balance the natural tendency of healthy networks to grow, sometimes exponentially, with the cost of growth.

LEADERSHIP IS AN EXPECTATION OF ALL MEMBERS

“I know as a leader I should always be looking and spotting out the new leaders... I’m always looking for that little something to grab on to in other people and pull them up in the ranks. I see my responsibility to pull others in as I was pulled in.”

In the networks we visited, leadership is an expectation of all members rather than a position enjoyed by a few. All six organizations had leadership groups, leadership training, and strategies for leaders to emerge and be put to use on behalf of the network. The strongest networks are those in which members take over leadership roles and constantly encourage others to do the same.

But social networks operate differently than other leadership models. The role of leader is fundamentally different; it is a connecting role. Called different things in different places (leader, weaver, connector, etc.), leadership in social networks represents a shift in how leaders function (reciprocally), how they are viewed (as equals), and how they view themselves (responsible and accountable to the network, not for the network). Members are accountable to one another but do not have authority over one another.

“One of the other major differences is that there’s a lot of unity. Everybody here treats each other equally. Nobody wants to be above anyone here and that makes more people want to become involved.”

THE NETWORK IS NON-HIERARCHICAL

“A lot of boards I am on are hierarchical—here we don’t practice hierarchies. We’re all leaders and that’s a given.”

Social networks grow by connecting people to each other in reciprocal relationships that are not one-way (e.g., provider to client), dependent, or hierarchical.

“Different community members are on decision-making committees, and [its] not majority wins. We all have to agree.”

“Someone who has only been here one year can be just as important as someone who has been here 27 years...”

Community members contend this is why effective social network approaches operate outside institutions and service systems, because the hierarchical nature of institutions is contrary to social network principles of reciprocity and equality.

We asked whether it's possible to take the lessons from social network organizations and apply them to other agencies and institutions in people's lives. We were told, no.

"Not as long as there are hierarchies. Even structures of buildings support hierarchies! Established hierarchies [are] in the black church too. You couldn't do it there. There would be a fight with the old, established leaders who just won't give up their positions."

This has implications for initiatives like *Making Connections* in both the construction of intentional social networks, like those we visited, and in infusing social network practices into existing organizations and agencies.

STAFF AS FACILITATOR, NOT LEADER

"Facilitator is only the motivator...we get people to know each other, and they support each other, provide security for each other...We allow them to talk so everything from the inside can come out. We try as facilitators to not control things so they commit to do the work."

Many professionals have been "hard-wired" in their training to respond to residents with distance and so-called "objectivity." This is not the case in social network organizations. The role of staff in organizations that adopt or promote social network principles is one of facilitator, not expert. Staff take care of the details, connect the network and its members beyond their often small circles, and are the keepers of the vision.

"Staff are go-to people...[They] take care of administrative details and the connections to people who do things that BW doesn't."

To achieve reciprocal relations, staff, and the organizations for which they work, must see not just their own worth, but the value of the people with whom they engage. They must be able to go much deeper than traditional professional relationships require. Not everyone can do this.

"We had staff who couldn't do this...You have to expose yourself."

POWER IN RELATIONSHIPS

"We haven't quite nailed how caring we can be. People come with whole lives."

Social networks are people working together in relationships. This is more than people being in the same room together, but rather people interacting with each other personally and toward the achievement of some collective goal.

Investing in people-to-people connections requires both creating the environment—places for people to meet and engage—and providing opportunities for people from dif-

ferent backgrounds and experiences to build community in ways that reinforce mutuality and reciprocity.

“Everyone who goes to a meeting takes their own agenda. They want to discuss their agenda. They think we’re going to solve their problem. When they see there’s an agenda and it’s not about their personal problem, they withdraw a little. At the end of first meeting, we have to be careful...so when they come back for second meeting, they can work with the group. If we fail here, the group will fail.”

In healthy social networks, one of the things that becomes immediately obvious is that people are friends. They see each other and are involved with one another outside of formal or organizational activities.

“We know each other and had seen each other in different community functions. But when we got involved in FII we got to know each other and found out we had a lot in common. Now our kids play together and do things together, too.”

THE ROLE OF STAFF IN ORGANIZATIONS THAT ADOPT OR PROMOTE SOCIAL NETWORK PRINCIPLES IS ONE OF FACILITATOR, NOT EXPERT.

FOUR

MOTIVATION TO JOIN

WHAT MOTIVATES PEOPLE TO JOIN SOCIAL NETWORKS?

TIMING AND RELEVANCE OF PARTICIPATION

“Three children were run over and that’s when they decided to take action and organize themselves and speak to the manager of the property.”

The right time to participate is highly individual. It can be determined by the conditions in a person’s life, by family circumstances, or as a result of neighborhood events.

EASE OF ACCESS AND NAVIGATION

“They can come in through any door and once they’re in, they’re invited to everything—information about programs, everything.”

There is an organic quality to social networks. Affiliation is voluntary and without pressure.

“There is no eligibility for participants. It is completely voluntary and self-directed, which is what makes the program so good.”

“The organization realizes you have your own life, so there is not lots of pressure. I am invited to participate. If I can, great; if I can’t, I say I can’t. I don’t feel pressured or obligated, but always open to participate when I can.”

Effective social networks make it easy for people to enter and move about the network. There are many different access points, doors into the network, so that a diversity of people is attracted to the network and what it offers. Lawrence Community Works refers to this as “open architecture”—everyone is welcome, there’s a lot to choose from, and information flows freely and effectively.

Ease of navigation is also about removing barriers to participation—providing programs and activities at times when people can participate, offering meals and child care and help with transportation, and reducing financial barriers.

“Here there is no financial pressure or obligation, really. Any costs or fees are well within the reach of regular citizens and families. And you will never be left out because of finances.”

KNOWLEDGE OF THE NETWORK

“It is easier if you’re brought in by someone who is already in the group. Like my Mom brought me. I imagine it is hard for people who come by themselves.”

Community members rely on their own social networks to connect to new social networks. This is an example of the power of close bonding ties. Most network members in the organizations we visited were introduced to the network by someone with whom they already had a close relationship.

BW is a case in point. We asked participants how they found out about BW. One participant responded, *“My apartment complex.”* Another resident of the same apartment complex added: *“We live at Eastwood, which is low-income housing. We formed a group.”* Others replied: *“I got connected through my mother.”* *“I got told about it from the rent assistance program.”* *“A domestic violence shelter.”* *“I got involved because I was having trouble with my truck. I was told to go to Red Cross. She told me about Beyond Welfare.”* *“I got involved through my Mom and she got involved through the domestic violence shelter.”* *“I heard about it through my counselor at the jail.”*

In this small group of nine participants at BW, they described learning about the organization through family, neighbors, community organizations, and public agencies.

Social network organizations also typically perform significant outreach to broaden their reach in the communities they serve. LCW staff described all the different ways they reach out to families in the community.

“We send a letter to our 700 members and 150 show up. But we want others. So we create a flyer, or you go to other places or meet with other organizations, like the health center or Head Start, and go to their community meetings and talk about the upcoming meeting. This gets really good results. For outreach, we have a radio show every Wednesday, we flyer the neighborhood, put things in the local newspaper. From that we do orientation, tell people about our programs, and people decide what to sign up for.”

REACHING OUT TO THE MOST VULNERABLE

“Sometimes someone has to reach out to them when they see people who are at rock bottom and seem isolated. Somewhere, somehow, somebody reaches out to them, and they reach back. That happened to me. That one person opens the door for you and helps you know what to do. It is not what you know, it is who you know. It goes back to these networks and the fact that there are good people out there.”

Some individuals or groups are more vulnerable and isolated, requiring more localized or individualized efforts to reach out to them and more support and encouragement to participate and then stay involved.

BW has studied the issue and has data to support the different perceptions of people who become poor compared to those who were raised in poverty.

“People who were raised middle class and found themselves in poverty as adults were willing to access social networks more readily than those raised in poverty... [they were] more comfortable or able to access social networks...”

INCENTIVES TO PARTICIPATE

Many of the programs we visited use concrete incentives that address individual or family needs in various ways to encourage participation. FII pays families financial awards up to \$3,000 a year for the first two years of participation. BW’s Wheels to Work program is often cited by residents as the incentive that enticed them into the network. The Wheels to Work program provides donated cars to participants who are TANF recipients and who agree to attend three Community Leadership meetings and make a two-year commitment to reciprocate through community service.

“The car program got me involved, but then I stayed involved.”

The incentives are not always things given to the participants. Incentives may also be what the participants pay or contribute as a condition of participation that makes what the network has to offer so much more valuable. For example, LUPE collects annual membership dues of \$40 per family that give participants access to everything the network has to offer. By paying dues, participants feel entitled to the network’s offerings in ways members of other networks might not.

“In the membership and literature that you read when you become a member you have the right to services that are listed there. Not only that but because you joined, they are going to give you all these.”

But the incentives, whether they are awards paid or fees charged, need to be attached to some activity that specifically connects the individual to the network. For example, FII participants are paid to attend affinity group meetings. LUPE members are expected to contribute dues. BW requires all participants in the Wheels to Work program to attend three Community Leadership Team meetings, which are the hallmark Thursday night gatherings of the network. The car is the incentive, but Thursday nights are the key. Once people attend and see how genuine it is and how people care about each other, they’re hooked.

“At first I didn’t want to come. But I had to come. So I was just sitting there watching, analyzing. What I heard, it made me want to come back.”

RACE, CULTURE, AND LANGUAGE MATTER

People connect easily with others from their same race or cultural tradition. As social network literature suggests, people are often more comfortable with other people who are the

most like them in terms of demographic characteristics or familiarity, who come from the same country for example and speak the same language. These are social connections that build on similarity. This is particularly important in helping people make that initial decision to enter the network, to walk into the room.

“It’s the origin of the family, where they come from. We meet here, and we are from the same country, and then we can participate here in something together. Church is another place that also has a spiritual connection.”

The reverse is also true. Not seeing and meeting other people like you can be a deterrent.

“Speaking for women of color, for us it is hard. I’ve literally seen where we are standing up for a half hour on those Thursday nights and no one came over to us. Some of my friends stopped coming because they felt ignored. People have stereotypes about Black women—we’re not bears, we don’t have claws. I can’t speak for anyone else, but I know what my experience has been.”

FIRST IMPRESSIONS MATTER

Make sure the first person someone sees is welcoming and inviting and acts to preserve and protect the dignity of everyone who walks in the door.

“Worst thing is to walk into any office [bank, private office] and walk up to the person at the front desk and have that person make you feel you are wasting their time. We talk about this at LCW. For us, it is a priority. Everyone from the receptionist to the director have to make people feel welcome. The first vibe people feel of being welcomed is critical. It’s not culture. It’s something personal.”

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WHAT MOTIVATES PEOPLE TO REMAIN CONNECTED?

RITUALS, COMMON PRINCIPLES, AND GROUP NORMS

“It’s a culture. It’s like core values that have been established that are so much a part of the culture because we all believe in that same thing.”

Social networks are dependent on trust. Rituals help create a safe and predictable environment for people who are trying out new relationships and exploring uncharted territory in their lives. The social network organizations we visited have developed creative and explicit processes and principles that anchor their members to each other through rituals and group norms.

BW’s Thursday night gatherings are rich with rituals and routines that are practiced over and over again.

“First thing is you’re fed. You experience hospitality. There’s a communion that goes on over food. You’re asked to say something good about your life. There are listening pairs. It’s only two minutes but it’s really radical. The undertone is profound. The undertone says: ‘You’re valuable. Now that you’re with us, we’re a little bit richer.’”

LUPE’s self-help philosophy is based on the teachings of César Chávez. For LUPE members, César Chávez lives on in their actions.

“We are involved because of what we know about the life of César Chávez and his fight, what we have learned about social change, so that it doesn’t die and it’s not in vain, so our children can grow up strong with a future with dignity and opportunity.”

A CHOICE AND VALUE ENVIRONMENT

“If you’re not getting any members that means you have nothing to offer.”

Regardless of what motivates people to engage, once they do, a choice of activities allowing everyone to find something of value to them is an important consideration. This is a key combination: choice and value. Mere choices are not enough, no matter how many or how varied.

People need to be able to find value and meaning in the choices available. This is particularly true for larger social networks or networks that intend to grow. Participants are encouraged to find the activities or opportunities that are most relevant to them at that time.

“If a person is not ready to be a leader but wants to be involved, we try to keep that person active... we try to get them onto a committee, or to volunteer, or help with child care. Pretty soon they notice that they are involved everywhere.”

In analysis conducted by BW, they discovered that those who were involved in multiple ways had more positive life changes than those who were less engaged.

“One of our first analyses pointed to something about the more comprehensive a person was in accessing the features of Beyond Welfare. Not only [were they] quicker getting off welfare but [there was] a correlation around higher income, especially around relationships, [and] more accessing of services through Thursday night [meetings].”

OPPORTUNITIES FOR FAMILIES TO PARTICIPATE

“Most programs I used to be in when I was on welfare actually separate the adults and the children... And that just makes matters worse. Older cultures have worked successfully because they realized you don't separate the children from their families.”

Many of the organizations we visited made intentional efforts to include or recognize the needs of family members, not just individual participants. This means that participants do not have to make a choice between the network and their family, and it also recognizes that strong families help promote strong communities.

The impact of having multiple family members engaged is not just one of convenience and opportunity, but, perhaps more importantly, one of promoting a forward hopefulness for the children.

“My children see who I am through what I do. I don't have to worry about them getting caught up in the streets. They know what success looks like now. They see what it takes.”

Older children, particularly teenagers, seek their own relationships and opportunities to express leadership.

“I saw that they accepted the opinions of youth. I observed the meeting, and I liked the way it happened, so I got involved. I feel good. It is a program that will give youth a future.”

But there are costs to families as well. Civically involved members struggle to strike a balance between their public and private roles.

“You want to help everybody and change the world initially... But you need to learn how to navigate your family responsibilities and your community responsibilities... because we all get tired... I still have family to care for... I don't want to lose my own family ties while I'm trying to help someone else.”

STANDING IN FOR DISTANT OR MULTIPROBLEM FAMILIES

“In my family, my old family, my biologic family, you ask for something and you get hurt. In my new family, it's okay.”

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Members of one's social network can replace or supplement distant or dysfunctional families with strong, if not stronger, familial relationships than one's biologic family.

"Outside of FII, I don't have family. I mean, I have blood relatives, but they are not people that help me, and I don't trust them. I can't lean on them. Everybody is doing their own thing. It is the FII family and some other close friends that are the people who are my family. They help me with my kids, give me advice, help me find resources, help me when I have problems. They see the inner self in me."

THE POWER OF A UNIFYING EXPERIENCE

"The members who participate in organizing with me, we talk. We talk about problems, and we work on them together. That is like a family."

Powerful bonds are formed by people who share common experiences. These unifying experiences connect people to others outside their personal networks and help keep them engaged. The term "unifying experience" is not ours, but rather a term residents in the sites used to describe the strong connections they felt with each other.

"The group I am in is six moms. Our other unifying experience is that we're all on welfare but wanting to come off of it, going to college. We all want positive change for ourselves and our families, our communities. We hold peer workshops with others like us—reaching out, helping them learn about college, domestic violence, getting off of welfare... being supportive."

In these examples, the commonality of single moms on welfare or of a group of people working together to solve common problems were important in forging a shared identity. We saw many examples of how these unifying experiences connected people in powerful ways. Where common race and other characteristics make it easier for people to enter a social network, it is these unifying experiences that forge strong group identities that cross race, class, and culture lines.

"We talk to each other about everything, share everything. We go to school together. If someone gets sick, we all know. Even though we are culturally different, we're our family. [She] is Filipino. [She] is Black. We don't see color."

The concept of a unifying experience is very helpful and important to the Foundation as it moves forward. It provides a meaningful glimpse into what the literature refers to as bridging social capital—links to people unlike you or outside one's personal network that provide a basis for shared identification and support.

OPPORTUNITY TO IMAGINE A DIFFERENT FUTURE

"[I] got so tired of being sick and tired. I needed caring people to help me to try and do something different."

WHERE COMMON RACE AND OTHER CHARACTERISTICS MAKE IT EASIER FOR PEOPLE TO ENTER A SOCIAL NETWORK, IT IS THESE UNIFYING EXPERIENCES THAT FORGE STRONG GROUP IDENTITIES THAT CROSS RACE, CLASS, AND CULTURE LINES.

One young man we spoke to reminded us that “conception is not the same as birth,” that people must first believe they deserve good things in their life before they can dare to dream; they must imagine a different self in order to imagine a different future. Social networks play a unique and powerful role in providing opportunities for their members to imagine a different future.

“People have to see a different future for themselves. They have to be visionaries. When I try and explain this project to some people, they hear me, but they aren’t listening. Even seeing me as an example is not enough. They have to see themselves. But people have gotten into believing that things do not change. It’s the way they have been socialized. They cannot believe they have things to build on.”

Residents talked about the struggle to break away and dream different dreams. They talked about the old relationships that held them back and how important their new relationships are to steeling them to move forward.

“I think it is true that some will never take the initiative. But there are some people out there who want to and will. And they are thinking about it. But there is a lot of negativity that will try and stop you. Among Black people... they accuse me of being too white because I’m trying to take initiative, trying to make a difference. They say we survived for years, we make do just staying in our little village.”

“When I went to school I lost 98 percent of my friends. I’ve experienced that whenever there’s been a major change in [my] life. Maybe they’re not where you’re at. But in Beyond Welfare, it’s kind of nice to go through changes and know they’ll be there and that you won’t lose 98 percent of your support.”

It is the network’s responsibility to provide permission to dream, affirm that the dream is possible, and provide support and linkages to make the dream a reality.

“It’s like taking somebody in the fields and saying you can do books. In the same way that César said, ‘I believe in you,’ we have to do the same thing so people can rise to the challenge.”

EXPECTATION AND OPPORTUNITY TO CONTRIBUTE

“People in poverty said do not give me something for nothing. I am sick to death of hand outs. There was a desire for people to give of their gifts.”

People don’t want something for nothing. A basic premise of social networks is the principle of reciprocity—members both take from and contribute to the network. In intentionally constructed networks like those we visited, this was not left to chance. Reciprocity is found in the groups’ rituals and routines. BW expresses this principle in its belief that everyone has gifts and talents just looking for an opportunity to be shared in the Thursday night “announcements.”

“It makes you feel good to be able to help other people when they get into situations where we’ve been.”

BUILDING A FRAMEWORK FOR RESULTS IN *MAKING CONNECTIONS*

Social networks cannot operate in a silo. The challenge is instead to infuse the existing environment—programs, organizations, communities, and initiatives—with a social network approach. A social network approach includes flexibility and adaptability, self-determination of where and how to participate, ease of access and navigation, and mutual support.

A simple example might be LCW’s individual development account (IDA) program. Participants join an IDA Club that meets twice each month for two years. Some members continue to meet after the two-year commitment is over. The first meeting each month is devoted to building financial literacy among members. The second meeting is a peer support class, providing opportunities for participants to bring their own personal experiences to the learning process and to develop meaningful relationships that extend beyond the classes. Members are also encouraged to participate in other LCW opportunities. They are told about other activities such as things that might be of interest to their children. Whenever any member succeeds in buying a house, the whole group succeeds and celebrates that success. By the time the classes are over, the members are so connected to the network that they seamlessly move on to other activities.

In this small example, we see that social networks are emergent but not accidental. In the constructed networks we saw, social networks formed as a result of intentional actions on the part of network weavers. People choose to engage and to help others to engage. People choose what to contribute to or ask of the network. Groups decide what they need and what actions they will take to meet those needs.

Now think about this small example on a larger scale: a robust network of explicit membership and identity for its members with clearly delineated roles and opportunities present at all times. The environment is open. People have many choices. The network grows and adapts in response to its members. The actions of participants are not nested in programs or tasks but in relationships. Service providers and consumers alike are building new habits of attachment. This is the kind of social network that a *Making Connections* site can and should create.

To get there, however, it is important to understand the different types of social network environments that exist. Even in the organizations we visited there was great variety in how the networks were constructed, what they were designed to achieve, and how they operated. We found it useful to think about this diversity in two ways: instrumental and transformative network environments.

INSTRUMENTAL NETWORK ENVIRONMENTS

“There are struggles. They are mostly single parents. Even if you raise economic levels, they’re still going to struggle.”

Some network environments are more instrumental by design, intentionally infusing the network with information and activities that support the achievement of specific results (e.g., homeownership, job referrals, etc.). In an instrumental network environment (INE), the goal is the specific result. The network is a byproduct. The outcomes participants strive to achieve are individual; that is they benefit the participant or their family rather than some greater social good. Activities are offered in group settings and participation is often incentive-driven.

As members naturally gravitate to wanting to change things structurally, participants seek results that benefit more than just themselves. For example, network members might work together to improve their children's school as a way of helping their own children first but ultimately benefiting all the children in the school.

INEs place a heavier burden and emphasis on staff rather than relying on members to support and maintain the network. Self-determination is often limited to what individual goal or collective issue to pursue rather than assuming ownership or responsibility over how the network or host organization operates.

The strength of INEs is their ability to help those who are most ready to be helped and, as a result, their ability to more quickly achieve the kinds of concrete results many care about (e.g., jobs, IDAs, and other tangible things of value). By infusing a program or organization with relatively small changes in thinking and practice, the program is able to generate more social capital and thus enhance its ability to achieve the results its members care about most.

Their weakness is that they do not seem situated to achieve either scope (breadth of effect for individuals and families) or sustainability. People participate to get something that is offered or provided in some instrumental way (e.g., access to jobs, IDAs, or training). Participants come and go. Very few relationships are sustained. Consequently, INEs are poor solutions for the most vulnerable members of a community; those with lifelong experiences of poverty and its effects.

TRANSFORMATIVE NETWORK ENVIRONMENTS

"It's different for each of us because it depends on what you need. Four people I already had relationships with became my allies. I trusted them but I didn't trust them with the stuff I needed to keep hidden from people. So at first I didn't really open up to them, and I started using again. I lost my job. They stuck with me, though. Helped me get back on my feet and find success again."

In a transformative network environment (TNE), the network is the goal. TNEs, by design, offer lots of people-to-people connections that support the development of lasting relationships. While incentives may be used to entice people to walk through the door, the real incentive for participation is the relationships that survive over time. In TNEs, other results—access to jobs, learned skills, or community change—are the byproduct of the network, not the goal.

The strength of TNEs is their ability to overcome isolation and affect participants' sense of identity, self-confidence, and openness to risk taking through participation in reciprocal group experiences. TNEs tend to be larger, reach greater numbers of people, and are able to help even the most vulnerable members of a community. Members take a much more active role in leading and supporting the network. An environment in which transformation is encouraged and supported is critical for community and systems change. TNEs are well situated to achieve scope and sustainability.

The weakness of TNEs is that they are not easily controlled and results cannot be predicted. Much about these types of social networks cannot be preprogrammed.⁷

BLENDING INSTRUMENTAL AND TRANSFORMATIVE

"It's a movement. And so if you operated strictly on the service, when that need is taken care of, then you're done. Or when my issue is resolved, then I'm done. In a movement, you're never done. You know, the specific items may be taken care of, but you still belong to it because it's greater than yourself."

PROGRAMS AND STRATEGIES THAT STRIVE ONLY TO INCREASE ACCESS WITHOUT ADDRESSING THE STRUCTURAL BARRIERS AND INEQUITIES THAT EXIST IN THE SERVICE DELIVERY SYSTEM ARE LIKELY TO FAIL.

To achieve the comprehensive community change envisioned by the Foundation, the *Making Connections* sites will need to incorporate elements of both instrumental and transformative network environments in their work. TNEs emphasize the importance of establishing relationships and connections that can help a program sustain itself over time. This is critical in an effort like *Making Connections* because the Foundation cannot support the initiative indefinitely. The scope and sustainability of the network will ensure that these communities don't default to their pre-*Making Connections* state. But TNEs are hard to control and even harder to predict. Individual gains and benefits come about organically, a byproduct of the enormous social capital generated in TNEs.

While INEs struggle to achieve scope and sustainability, they are well situated to achieve the types of individual results that the Foundation would be encouraged to see during the specific period of its involvement. For example, if the goal is to help people find jobs, an instrumental network may suffice. But if the goal is to keep the job and advance economically, instrumental networks are insufficient in that the network disappears and people are once again isolated. Without a sustainable network, risk is compounded and the ideas and options to respond to risk are once again limited.

To understand how instrumental and transformative networks might be combined, we compared attributes of INEs and TNEs to the *Making Connections* core result areas—which, for the purposes of this discussion, we have organized into three categories: individual and family results, community results, and systems change results. For each, we attempted to define how that network environment (instrumental or transformative) might behave along a series of key social network concepts:

- The infusion of a social network approach;
- The use of incentives;

- Targets of intentional bridging efforts;
- Attributes of a “choice” environment;
- Attributes of member self-determination; and
- The role of network weavers (staff or members).

Figure 1: To achieve individual and family results: more jobs, increased income and assets, healthy children, and improved school readiness

INE CHARACTERISTICS	TNE CHARACTERISTICS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Network is infused with lots of instrumental information, for example, about job openings or training opportunities > Participation is often incentive-driven > Intentional bridging to opportunities > Choice environment includes access to jobs, IDAs, and other tangible things of value > Members determine what to access or take advantage of > Role of weavers is to connect people to information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Network is infused with common beliefs and principles that guide how members act with each other > Entry may be incentive-driven but not ongoing participation > Intentional bridging to other people with diverse experiences and backgrounds > Choice environment includes tangible things of value but also expectation of leadership and opportunity to give as well as take > Members determine what the network offers > Role of weavers is to connect people to other people

An analysis of Figure 1 suggests that a combination of aspects of TNEs and aspects of INEs make the social network approach far more powerful. In TNEs, participants are in transformative relationships, not just activities, and they have more say over the network itself ensuring that the network continues to have value to its members. But it is the INE’s intentional focus on tangible results that helps propel the network in desired directions. In the combined approach, members might have a great deal of say over what tangible things are included and how they’re delivered, but the network weavers ensure the network is richly populated with information and connections to opportunities that bring concrete results.

It might be tempting to stop here if these more tangible results were the only goal. But there are two reasons why this would be a mistake. First, network members will themselves

go down the path of wanting to achieve community and systems change. An initiative or organization using a social network approach that attempts to limit the network to only the self-interests of the individual members and not the collective interest of the group will soon find itself obsolete. It will have failed to deliver the “value proposition” members want.

Second is the challenge of scale. The Foundation has placed a strong emphasis in *Making Connections* on not just achieving results, but on closing the gap between families living in distressed communities and everyone else. This is not just a matter of numbers. To Casey, this is an issue of equity. And closing the gap means going to scale.

At an organizational level, instrumental networks developed to achieve individual tangible results may find it difficult to serve more than a handful of people given the cost of incentives and the heavy staff burden. TNEs will reach greater numbers, but like INEs, as participants strive to access tangible things of value, they are likely to encounter structural barriers fueled by habits of detachment that make wide-scale success unlikely.

Making Connections architects recognized not just the value of community and systems results to *Making Connections*, but the interdependence of all the result areas. Programs and strategies that strive only to increase access without addressing the structural barriers and inequities that exist in the service delivery system are likely to fail.

Figures 2 and 3 highlight how the instrumental and transformative network environments might behave along the same key social network concepts in achieving community and systems change results.

Figure 2: To achieve community results: mutual support and civic engagement

INE CHARACTERISTICS	TNE CHARACTERISTICS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Network is infused with lots of skill and leadership development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Network is infused with shared values for the common good and for how the community should support its members
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Stipends are sometimes used to encourage participation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Resources for group projects, not incentives for participation, are often made available
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Intentional linking to people in power 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Intentional bridging to next generation of leaders
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Choice environment includes a range of leadership opportunities, celebrations, and support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Choice environment includes expectation of leadership and menu of activities that meet individual, family, and community needs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Members determine choice of issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Members determine network priorities, network shape, and menu of activities and opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Role of weavers is to recruit and connect people across networks and groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Role of weavers is to build leaders who in turn build other leaders and grow the network

We saw many examples of community change during our site visits and signs that once these organizations grow and mature, they will have a substantial impact on systems change as well. Where we saw the most activity and the most promise of achieving real and sustainable systems change, however, was in the locations we would characterize as TNEs.

Figure 3: To achieve systems change results: improved and responsive services and supports

INE CHARACTERISTICS	TNE CHARACTERISTICS
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="743 722 1203 785">> Network is infused with habits of attachment that replace habits of detachment <li data-bbox="743 806 1081 837">> The incentive is change itself <li data-bbox="743 858 1235 953">> Members link the network to power as they begin to occupy positions of authority within or over organizations and institutions <li data-bbox="743 974 1219 1037">> Choice environment includes how systems should operate and what they should offer <li data-bbox="743 1058 1203 1121">> Members determine priorities and governance of the organization <li data-bbox="743 1142 1198 1247">> Role of weavers is to hold the vision and connect members to skills (organizing, policy development, social justice, etc.)

WHAT RESULTS CAN BE EXPECTED?

The organizations we visited noted many examples of the benefits that result from the connections, information, and strength people find in social networks.

BW tracked 131 participants between 1999 and 2004 and found that 65 out of 121 people on cash assistance at intake were now off assistance. Sixty-six percent were working compared to 36 percent at intake. And average monthly earned income for the participants it tracked increased from \$236 to \$1,869.

Community Organizing and Family Issues parents won funding to establish two new community play-lots, instituted parent-teacher mentor programs in 11 schools, successfully lobbied for new parent rooms in 15 schools and 5 new computer labs, and organized to open community centers that operate after-school programs for both children and adults in more than 12 schools.

FII participants increased their average monthly income by 26 percent. One hundred percent of families opened an IDA account (the first formal savings account for 40 percent of these families), increasing average family savings by 141 percent. Nine families became homeowners, and 21 out of 25 uninsured families obtained health insurance, all within a two-year period.

LCW built 25 new affordable housing units, two new playgrounds, engaged over 400 families in family asset-building programs, won the first major zoning change in the city since 1946, and mounted organizing campaigns for affordable housing, against predatory lending, and for the clean up of city-owned and privately owned abandoned land and alleyways.

All of these organizations credit their social network approach for their success. The residents we met with provided many individual stories of the benefit of social networks for them and their families. A few are listed below:

- **Access to services.** The translator explained: *“Her daughter was without health insurance. She went to a workshop and the person that she knew through the workshop gave her information about what to do with that... Health insurance was one piece. Now she tells a lot of families without insurance where to go when you lose MediCal.”*
- **Information about jobs.** A recent hire at LCW explained how she found her job: *“Both my aunt and mother work for the community, and they knew about LCW. I also knew [the supervisor] through church.”*
- **Access to training.** A resident listed the training she received through the organization: *“Finance classes, how to start your own child care program, how to file taxes.”*
- **Greater support for families experiencing crises.** *“Sheena’s Mom is now my best friend. I met her by giving to her. I just became homeless a week ago, and now I’m living with her.”*

- **Homeownership.** As told by the translator, *“First thing they thought of was buying homes, and thank goodness they were able to do that and help each other.”*
- **Decreased dependency on systems.** *“Self-sufficient is not having more income. It may be more generations in one house, taking care of each other, not dependent on outsiders, or having familial relationships with others.”*

Key themes emerged in the site visits, repeated by many people in multiple places. These, we believe, in addition to the individual results, are a major contribution of social networks.

FUTURE GENERATIONS ARE THE REAL BENEFICIARIES

The real beneficiaries of a social network approach may well be future generations. Children whose families participate in social networks or who participate themselves learn different life lessons about what is possible and about their own self-worth.

“We have noticed that young people here are starting to choose positive directions, not the negative ones where so much and so many were going downhill. We see the young people getting involved in motivating activities at LCW.”

The relationships between children and their parents are much improved.

“My relationship with my Mom has totally changed. She was an alcoholic who needed to get help. Through BW she was helped, she’s now sober, and our whole family is so much better.”

COMMUNITY AND SYSTEMS CHANGE

In time, families in social networks move beyond wanting to meet just their own needs or those of others in the group. They naturally gravitate to wanting to change things structurally—community change, policy change, systems change.

“When I first came to training it was to try and find out how things worked. I didn’t speak English back then. Through the training, I started setting goals for myself and realized I wanted to do things for people and the school and my neighborhood to make it a better place for my child.”

There were numerous examples of community or systems change efforts and successes in the sites.

“We’re making ripples in the bigger picture. Every fall we talk to our senators and representatives. We stopped them from cutting child care when they were cutting everything else.”

“Food stamps went into swipe card form based on our advocacy.”

“We marched on Sacramento to let the governor know not to take [away] the supports that are helping us to help ourselves, like money for higher education.”

SOCIAL NETWORKS
SHOW THEIR GREAT-
EST PERSONAL
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SELF-WORTH BY
BROADENING THE
NETWORKS ON
WHICH INDIVIDUALS
AND FAMILIES
CAN RELY.

"[It] helped [my] kids go to a better school."

"We have worked for beautification of the neighborhood and eventually will build a better neighborhood."

"We all cleaned up the streets, and now the street cleaner comes to our neighborhood and does the job because they were like, 'Wow!' They could see us marching in the streets with our brooms, and they know this is something we are about."

The most robust networks are intentional about providing opportunities for network members to encourage or demand substantive changes in the institutions that impact their community.

"I'm on a county board as a community advisor and it is very different, but I hope to make it more like BW. I want them to know more about how we do things here."

When the residents were asked what they think of when you think of social networks, one replied:

"I think about it in its simplest form—the community coming together, playing a part, talking about ideas and problems and how they can work together to fix them."

BUILDING CONFIDENCE AND OVERCOMING ISOLATION

Social networks show their greatest personal results helping people overcome isolation and instilling self-confidence and self-worth by broadening the networks on which individuals and families can rely. These networks transform their members through positive, reciprocal relationships and are particularly important for the most vulnerable members of a community.

"I have four kids, from age 14 to 8. I was on welfare for 12 years in California. To tell you the truth, I didn't think I could work. Now that I have a job, I couldn't imagine why I wasn't doing this all along. You get that way and you don't even realize you are that way. I didn't realize the trap I was in."

"My father was an alcoholic, abused my mother, and they got divorced. That's what I came from, and then I turned right around and did the same things myself. I was in this chaotic, vicious cycle, but I have decided to stop it right here. I don't want my kids going through this all over again when they grow up."

Ultimately, it is not just organizations and initiatives that demand results, but participants themselves who need to know that their efforts are paying off. The more success groups' experience, the more people stay engaged and expect bigger things.

"People need to see results, so you have to communicate about progress...start small with something you can do within six months and see results. And then people can see that it is not just about the short term, but also about the long term. This helps you sustain involvement from people, and people can see that they can make change happen."

FINAL WORDS

“Once social change begins, it cannot be reversed. You cannot uneducate the person who has learned to read. You cannot humiliate the person who feels pride. You cannot oppress the people who are not afraid anymore.”

—César Chávez

There is no single model to emulate, no program to pick up in one place and plant in another. All of the organizations we visited, and the social network environments they helped form, grew out of unique local circumstances and the hearts and minds of people who cared enough to care. They are each special and belong specifically to those people and places.

But there is much that can be learned from them, and that knowledge is transportable. We have tried in this paper to tease out the most important lessons about the qualities vibrant and healthy social networks must have and about the motivations that compel people to join and remain connected to them. With this knowledge, we believe *Making Connections* can work with its sites to build and strengthen social networks in their communities in ways that will enhance traditional interventions and boost the impact and scale of the results. Specifically, the *Making Connections* initiative can:

1. **Add value** to the strategies, programs, and partner organizations already at work in each community;
2. **Sustain the positive effects**, not just for current participants, but also for future generations;
3. **Reach vulnerable populations** that are not reached through more traditional approaches; and
4. **Effect community and systems changes**, which occur when people band together in new and different types of relationships—relationships built on habits of attachment. These changes not only benefit families in the short term, but also make it easier to achieve and sustain meaningful results in the future.

DESCRIPTIONS OF THE SIX ORGANIZATIONS VISITED BY THE SOCIAL NETWORK TEAM

BEYOND WELFARE—AMES, IOWA

Beyond Welfare (BW) seeks to end poverty by facilitating relationships and providing concrete supports to low-income individuals and families. BW doesn't look like your standard welfare-to-work program—it only employs two full-time staff people, and the program is not organized around formalized job training or job placement. What BW does is community building. BW builds networks that connect families on welfare to caring and supportive people in the community and beyond. BW takes a “whole person/family system/social context” approach to supporting families. The program is organized around the outcomes: “money, meaning, and relationships.” People need meaningful employment with decent wages (money); a purpose around which to organize their family, employment, and community life (meaning); and relationships that are mutually supportive and reciprocal, both within and outside family (relationships).

Program Components

- **Family Assessment**—A family assessment, the door into BW, initiates the process of relationship building with families and results in a self-sufficiency plan that helps shape participation in the program.
- **Circles of Support**—Circles of Support link families who are experiencing poverty with volunteers in better economic circumstances. Participants are matched with cross-class “allies” who are selected and trained in response to the participant’s self-sufficiency plan. The circles meet at least monthly, and each meeting focuses on what the participant needs to move to the next level of achieving his or her goals. Allies provide support as varied as babysitting or résumé help to taking in a Mom’s children while she is in a residential substance abuse treatment program.
- **Wheels to Work**—Cars are donated by local community members who receive tax write-offs for their donations. In order to receive a car, participants must be on TANF or working poor, complete an intake (family assessment), attend three Community Leadership Team meetings, and make a two-year commitment to reciprocate through community service and involvement in the network.
- **Community Leadership Team**—This is a local chapter of a statewide advocacy network that develops relationships with state and national policymakers to increase government commitment to child care and other welfare-to-work supports. Everyone is invited to attend weekly dinners on Thursday nights. The dinners are usually attended by 25 to 40 participants, their families, and

allies. Meals are followed by training sessions on topics related to economic self-sufficiency and advocacy on how to shape systems.

Distinguishing Characteristics

- Profile of vulnerable families—BW works with individuals and families who have been significantly affected by poverty. For example, at intake 71 percent reported that they were raised in households with poverty, 70 percent reported abuse as a child, 54 percent reported mental health problems, 50 percent reported domestic violence, 38 percent had chronic health issues, 35 percent reported involvement with the criminal justice system, and 26 percent had interactions with the child welfare system.
- Intentional bonding across class—BW is based on getting people to build relationships with each other across class lines. The Circles of Support are heavily populated by middle-class and even upper-middle-class volunteers who are or were part of Iowa’s professional class. (Some volunteers are retired.) These “allies,” as they are called at BW, describe the relationships they build with participants as among the most profound in their lives and refer to them not as clients, but as friends.
- Rituals and group norms—BW has many rituals and group norms that have emerged for how network members behave with one another. For example, each Community Leadership Team (referred to by participants simply as “Thursday nights”) begins with individuals and families sharing a meal. This is followed by routine practices such as “new and good” in which participants gather in a circle and share something new and good in their lives as a way of reinforcing that their lives are not just about the negatives. Then there are “announcements.” This is a time when any member of the circle can ask for help (for example, a washing machine, bikes for the kids, help with roofing a house, a ride to the welfare office), and others in the circle are expected to respond as a way of reinforcing that everyone has gifts and talents that are valued by the group and that it’s okay to ask for help. This may be followed by “listening pairs” in which individuals pair up and listen, really listen, to each other without interrupting as a way of reinforcing that everyone has a voice and that their voice is cherished. And this is all before the main topic of each meeting is addressed.

COMMUNITY ORGANIZING AND FAMILY ISSUES—CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

Community Organizing and Family Issues (COFI) strengthens the power and voice of low-income and working families at all levels of civic life—from local institutions and communities to city and state policy arenas. Through an intentional leadership development and organizing process—Family Focused Organizing (FFO)—parents develop skills, confidence, and organized power to win improvements in schools, communities,

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and public policies. FFO focuses first on strengthening the individual. Parents develop leadership skills, problem-solving tools, and strong, mutually supportive teams. FFO then builds the participants' capacities to take on larger projects and lead campaigns in their schools and communities. As participants achieve goals in the community, they then develop broad public policy campaigns to change programs and challenge policies that aren't meeting the needs of families in their area.

Program Components

- Parent Action Teams—Parent Action Teams are formed in local schools and communities and are comprised of parents who have completed a six-session, introductory leadership development course called “Self, Family, and Team.” Once the Parent Action Teams are formed, staff provides ongoing organizing support and team-building training to help them achieve their goals.
- Community Outreach and Action Training—New community leaders and other local residents participate in Community Outreach and Action Training that helps build relationships, identify issues, and engage more parents in working toward more ambitious community organizing goals.
- POWER-PAC (Parents Organized to Win, Educate, and Renew—Policy Action Council)—This is a citywide parent organization formed to change programs and policies at both the city and state levels. COFI provides advanced training in policy and systems change and builds partnerships between community residents and professionals to develop programs and policies that work.

Distinguishing Characteristics

- Intentional focus on policy change—Recognizing that many of the issues that make communities unsafe and unhealthy are rooted in public policies beyond the local level, COFI is structured to develop a strong cadre of parents to impact the policy process. Parents are taught to articulate their ideas and vision for families in the community, and advocates and institutional staff are taught about organizing and how to listen to the families.
- Departure from traditional organizing—Responding to the perception that traditional organizing models fail to attend to mutual support and have generated an organizing tradition hostile to service provision, COFI has emerged as an alternative organizing model for families. COFI explicitly recruits from low-income families, primarily mothers. The continuities between family and community leadership, and between private and public issues, are emphasized. COFI takes the view that leadership is not just about tackling community issues but also about mutual aid and support.

FAMILY INDEPENDENCE INITIATIVE—OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA

Family Independence Initiative (FII) takes an innovative approach to working with low-income families as they move from poverty to self-sufficiency. Launched in 2001, FII started with a two-year pilot project to explore whether focusing on shared strengths and mutuality among families, as opposed to needs and services, could inspire those stuck in poverty to move to self-sufficiency. Through an innovative combination of family incentives, waivers of welfare income requirements, and social networks, FII creates affinity groups of low-income families with similar backgrounds. FII is presently working with ten different affinity groups. FII's theory relies on the power of peer role models. These role models are not traditional leaders but rather peers living in similar circumstances that have taken the first steps and raised the bar of possibilities and expectations for other group members.

Program Components

- **Asset Building**—FII has an intentional focus on asset accumulation. As a financial incentive, FII provides a 2:1 individual development account (IDA) match (up to \$2,000) for participating families. FII is also matching informal lending circles that have cropped up in some groups. Families with little income recruit others to contribute funds for the purchase of a home. Others have pooled funds to start or grow businesses.
- **Waiver of income and asset rules**—In April 2003, FII was granted the first, non-legislatively mandated waiver by the State of California Department of Social Services that allows FII to enroll and give financial awards to welfare families without jeopardizing their welfare and food stamp benefits. The waiver was a direct response to an obstacle faced early on by FII families receiving welfare payments. FII tried to inspire family participation with a monetary award, but the families' monthly checks were cut by the same amount as the awards. The waiver is in effect for three years as a pilot aimed at designing a statewide demonstration of the FII approach to working with families receiving government benefits.

Distinguishing Characteristics

- **Emphasis on affinity**—In each affinity group FII convenes, a core of one to three families is identified. These core families then recruit additional families who are all bound together by a shared affinity, such as religion, language, and/or culture. FII refers to these natural networks as “affinity communities.” For example, the initial pilot worked with two African-American groups, one Salvadoran group, and one group of Laotian refugees.
- **Use of financial incentives**—Upon entering the network, each family receives a home computer and \$250. Families also qualify for up to \$3,000 in pre-set

THROUGH AN INNOVATIVE COMBINATION OF FAMILY INCENTIVES, WAIVERS OF WELFARE INCOME REQUIREMENTS, AND SOCIAL NETWORKS, THE FAMILY INDEPENDENCE INITIATIVE CREATES AFFINITY GROUPS OF LOW-INCOME FAMILIES WITH SIMILAR BACKGROUNDS.

monetary awards paid across four categories—education, health, finances and employment, and participation. Awards are available to families for participation in a wide variety of activities including after-school programs or child care, enrollment in a health insurance program, improving credit ratings, obtaining new jobs, or simply participating in FII monthly meetings. Affinity groups are also eligible for \$5,000 for projects benefiting their community.

- Data tracking—FII requires participating families to provide baseline information and monthly updates regarding: income and assets, housing, education and skills, health and wellness, connections and resources, and personal resourcefulness and leadership. Families also set their own goals and create steps to reach these goals. Progress toward the achievement of these goals is tracked regularly. Combined, these data provide a rich array of individual, family, affinity group, and aggregate information that FII uses to monitor, adapt, and communicate about its programs and activities.

GRACE HILL SETTLEMENT HOUSE—ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI

Grace Hill has been helping neighbors help neighbors in nine St. Louis, Missouri, neighborhoods for nearly 100 years. Grace Hill’s mission is “to help poor families break the cycle of poverty and achieve self-sufficiency.” It brings together an array of resources primarily through two agencies—Grace Hill Settlement House and Grace Hill Neighborhood Health Centers, Inc. An additional feature is a unique resource and service delivery system based upon the Time Dollars concept called MORE (Member Organized Resource Exchange). Through MORE, neighbors provide supports and services to each other.

Program Components

- Child care development programs include Co-Care (a teen-parenting program) and day care options.
- Youth programs offer tutoring, youth councils, and leadership development for youth between the ages of 13 and 18.
- An elder care program, Systems to Assure Elderly Services (STAES), enlists the help of able seniors who visit the homes of more frail and/or disabled neighbors and provide care, resources, and support.
- Family stabilization programs for the homeless provide homeless families with skills to enable them to move past barriers and obtain permanent housing.
- Education and economic stabilization programs include a neighborhood college, welfare-to-work programs, and business development training.

- The MORE Time Dollar Exchange, a dignified and cost-effective mode of service delivery, allows neighbors to trade their time and efforts for goods and services that they otherwise could not afford.
- Head Start helps approximately 1,500 pre-kindergarten children receive the educational and developmental tools they need to be prepared for kindergarten.
- AmeriCorps provides opportunities for neighbors age 18 and over to learn teamwork, conflict resolution, and good work ethics in nontraditional career paths such as environmental preservation or preventive health care.
- Six community health centers provide preventive and medical care for disadvantaged residents, including primary health care services and prescriptions.
- The Health-to-Go van is a mobile outreach program for residents in the nine Grace Hill neighborhoods.
- Public Housing Primary Care provides health care services for approximately 4,000 residents of public housing located in St. Louis' Near South Side.

Distinguishing Characteristics

- Working with chronically poor families in neighborhoods that have been disadvantaged for years, Grace Hill seeks to provide a broad range of services and resources to all age groups as part of its comprehensive approach to helping residents and families break the cycle of poverty and become healthy, productive, and self-sufficient.
- The emphasis on “neighbors helping neighbors” through the MORE Time Dollar Exchange program provides an opportunity for residents to give and take the resources and supports they need with dignity and respect. Interestingly, MORE members are able to barter their Time Dollars for services and supports beyond the boundaries of the neighbor-to-neighbor exchanges, using Time Dollars for training workshops and classes, health care services, and career development.
- The Women’s Business Center, established in 1994, is a displaced homemaker employment development program emphasizing small business creation and has trained a cadre of entrepreneurs who now run their own child care centers.

LAWRENCE COMMUNITY WORKS—LAWRENCE, MASSACHUSETTS

Lawrence Community Works (LCW) was built on the remnants of a community development corporation (CDC) that was on the brink of failure in 1999. LCW’s mission is to create an ever-growing network of Lawrence residents engaged in building family and

community assets, providing mutual support, and engaging in collective action to help revitalize the city. LCW utilizes a network organizing approach to create an environment that maximizes the ability of people to establish and nurture connections that are mutually beneficial.

Program Components

LAWRENCE COMMUNITY WORKS UTILIZES A NETWORK ORGANIZING APPROACH TO CREATE AN ENVIRONMENT THAT MAXIMIZES THE ABILITY OF PEOPLE TO ESTABLISH AND NURTURE CONNECTIONS THAT ARE MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL.

- Committees—LCW offers a variety of committees that engage residents in rebuilding Lawrence while building the social capital of participants. At any given time, there may be a half dozen or more committees in operation. A good example is the Our House Committee working to build a new community center in an abandoned school building. When finished, Our House will become home to all of LCW’s youth and adult programs. As with all LCW committees, the Our House Committee is open to all interested people, youth and adults. Members are deciding how the building should look, recommending programming, raising funds, planning events, and conducting outreach.
- Neighbor Circles—Neighbor Circles are a unique LCW strategy for engaging Lawrence families in positive and productive discussion around the issues that affect their lives. A Neighbor Circle is a series of three, one-hour meetings involving up to eight families conducted in a neighbor’s home. Participants get to know each other, discuss issues that affect their lives, and consider what they can do as a group to improve their community.
- PODER Leadership Institute—PODER is a six-month, intensive, self-development and leadership-building experience for adults and youth who want to take on leadership roles in the community. Participants cultivate their leadership skills, deepen their analysis of economics and power, understand the history of Lawrence, and strengthen the network of engaged and skillful leaders in Lawrence.
- Family Asset Building—Family Asset Building is an economic development strategy that promotes educational advancement and creates social capital. Adult learning clubs, that emphasize the importance of establishing relationships with others, are focused around the core values of family asset building, mutual support, and collective action. Examples include Computer Skills Club, English Club, First-Time Home Buyers Club, Savings Club, Sewing Club, and others. Members learn new skills, get to know a wide variety of community members, and engage in other asset-building, community organizing, and revitalization projects.
- Movement City—Movement City is an empowerment network for Lawrence youth between the ages of 10 and 19. The objective of Movement City is to

build an ever-expanding network of young people from Lawrence who explore and shape their own futures and participate in shaping the future of the city.

Distinguishing Characteristics

- Open architecture—Anyone who lives in Lawrence can become a member of LCW. It's easy to get involved and move around. In LCW, any project, program, or activity is a door into the network. Regardless of how members enter, information about all other network choices is made available, and participants are actively encouraged to take advantage of all the network has to offer. At regular meetings, LCW staff are expected to identify potential new leaders from their groups, bridge direct relationships between network members and other staff or leaders, and facilitate ease of movement.
- Demand-driven environment—LCW is constantly adapting in response to participant demands. Network members develop ideas, programs, and committees through group interactions. LCW staff openly discuss and embrace new ideas and let go of the old to make room for the new. An example of this demand-driven environment is the annual community meeting to elect new board members. All members are invited and they show up, hundreds of them, and vote for the board members of their choice. The votes are counted at the meeting and results announced that same night. Consequently, the board is heavily dominated by community members who come out of and are immersed in the network's vision not just for LCW, but for the city of Lawrence.
- Role of weavers—LCW recognizes the powerful role played by network “weavers,” members who are actively engaging and connecting people that they meet in the network. These weavers form hubs in the wider network. LCW relies not just on its staff but on its members to build the network, which currently includes almost 1,000 individuals, 300 to 400 of whom are very active participants.

LINKED TO THE FARM
WORKERS' UNION,
LUPE IS A SELF-HELP
ORGANIZATION
BASED UPON THE
LIFE AND TEACHING
OF CÉSAR CHÁVEZ.

LA UNION DE PUEBLO ENTERO (LUPE)—SOUTH TEXAS, SAN JUAN

César Chávez founded LUPE, an organization rooted in the belief that members of low-income communities have the responsibility and obligation to organize themselves and, through their association, begin to advocate for solutions to the issues that impact their lives. The LUPE strategy of change has evolved over the last three decades and now consists of four, interrelated components: 1) responding to the immediate needs of people, 2) investing in the self-development of people, 3) transforming people and their communities through participation and advocacy, and 4) building “communities of conscience” that bridge economic and social differences across the entire community.

Program Components

- Social services—LUPE provides assistance with immigration applications, document translations, interventions with local authorities, and workers' rights advocacy. The Texas Civil Rights Project provides a wide range of legal services focused on protecting the civil rights of low-income people.
- Economic services—The program offers a variety of economic services and supports including: promotion of the Earned Income Tax Credit; low-income, self-help housing that can deliver a family home for as little as \$18,500; microenterprise loans for home-based, small businesses; and emergency family support loans, financial literacy and homeownership classes, individual development accounts (IDAs), and cash assistance to liberate a family from or prevent its return to welfare assistance. In addition, the LUPE network links residents with merchants, attorneys, physicians, and other professionals who offer goods and services for free or at a discount.
- *Programa Escalera*—This program invests in the self-development of LUPE members by offering such things as literacy, English as a Second Language (ESL), General Equivalency Diploma (GED), and U.S. citizenship classes.
- *Juntos Adelante*—The purpose of this program is to identify natural leaders within the community and engage them in a development process to amplify their effectiveness.

Distinguishing Characteristics

- Linked to the Farm Workers' Union, LUPE is a self-help organization based upon the life and teaching of César Chávez. Members seek to follow the example Chávez set in obtaining self-sufficiency not only for individual gain, but for the entire community.
- Homeownership is possible for poor families through their willingness to provide sweat equity in the building of their own homes.
- Community organizing is the primary approach for building the membership base.
- Members pay an annual fee (\$40) that entitles them to a range of services and supports and engages them in an array of community service opportunities.
- Through membership fees, LUPE provides additional services such as immigration assistance, income tax preparation, and auto insurance.

ENDNOTES

- 1 To learn more about the Annie E. Casey Foundation, please visit www.aecf.org.
- 2 The visit to the Grace Hill Settlement House was more limited than the other site visits in which the Social Network Team conducted and recorded structured conversations with multiple groups of residents and staff. While no transcripts are available for Grace Hill, the visit was no less valuable or informative.
- 3 See the Appendix for full descriptions of each organization and its work.
- 4 CHRISTIAAN GROOTAERT, DEEPA NARAYAN, VERONICA NYHAN JONES, AND MICHAEL WOOLCOCK, *Measuring Social Capital: An Integrated Questionnaire* (Washington, D.C.: The World Bank, 2004); KAREN HEALY AND ANNE HAMPSHIRE, *Beyond the Local: Using Social Networks as a Policy Resource for Building Resilient Communities*, Originally published for and presented at the Social Policy Research Centre Conference, Sydney, Australia (July 2003); KAREN HEALY AND ANNE HAMPSHIRE, *Community Capacity Building: From Ideas to Realities*, A paper presented at the Australian Association of Social Workers Conference, Melbourne, Australia (September 2001).
- 5 X. BRIGGS, "Brown Kids in White Suburbs: Housing Mobility and the Many Faces of Social Capital," *Housing Policy Debate* Volume 9, Issue 1 (Fannie Mae Foundation, 1998).
- 6 ANNE HAMPSHIRE AND KAREN HEALY, *Creating Better Communities: Social Capital Creation in Four Communities*, Originally published for the Community Capacity and Community Strength Forum, Sydney University (May 2002); ANNE HAMPSHIRE AND KAREN HEALY, *Social Capital in Practice*, Originally published for and presented at the Australian Institute of Family Studies Conference (July 2000).
- 7 PETER PLASTRIK AND MADELEINE TAYLOR, *Network Power for Philanthropy and Nonprofits* (Boston, MA: Barr Foundation, Network Research Project, Draft February 2004).

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