

Rainier Beach Neighborhood Capacity Project
Fundors Meeting
12 December 2011

Attendees:

- Judy de Barros – Neighbor to Neighbor Fund
- Lori Guilfoyle – United Way of King County
- Alice Ito – Marguerite Casey Foundation
- LiLi Liu – Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation

- Christie Coxley – Rainier Beach Neighborhood Advisory Committee
- Gregory Davis – Rainier Beach Neighborhood Advisory Committee
- Fikru Kifle – Ethiopian Community Mutual Association
- Vu Le – Vietnamese Friendship Association
- Cheryl dos Remedios – Rainier Beach Neighborhood Advisory Committee
- David Sauvion – Rainier Beach Neighborhood Advisory Committee
- Angie Tomisser – Rainier Beach Urban Farm

- Nora Liu – City of Seattle Department of Planning and Development
- Sebhat Tenna – City of Seattle Department of Planning and Development
- Trang Tu – Consultant
- Nanette Fok – Consultant

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Comments from attendees:

Special things that community members noted about the Rainier Beach neighborhood:

- wonderful, emerging initiatives
- diversity
- the beach, fresh air
- access to the lake
- stories of the people, history, heritage
- schools
- communities
- food
- infrastructure

Speakers' remarks:

Alice Ito, Marguerite Casey Foundation

- Will start with sharing basic information about grantseeking. Much of this is information that you can read about in how-to guides. In preparing to seek grants, should consider the following:
 - Is your organization structured in a way that you can describe it to someone outside of your group?
 - Does your group have a program that you all agree on?
 - Do you all know what your main purpose is? Are you able to describe it to those who know nothing about it? Can it be described in a meaningful way to those outside of your organization?
 - Do you have a budget?
 - Do you have a fundraising plan?
- As a funder, she looks at how well the organization works internally: how well do people work together as a team? when do they agree? how do they work internally to resolve differences? how well do they work with others?
- In a diverse group, the more different people are, the more time, care and effort it takes to do things, both internally and in relation to others.
- Trust and relationships are so important. When there is trust, people can get so many things done. If there is no trust, you can have a logical plan, but it can be very difficult to get things accomplished.
- Need to remember how much time it will take to make/keep those trusting relationships in order to do those things you most care about. Sometimes you are on a tight timeline and will feel very pressed because of something like a grant deadline. Need to keep in mind that sometimes it's not worth hitting the deadline if it jeopardizes the building of trusting relationships. Sometimes the money isn't worth it.
- Need also to keep in mind that funders are really different from one another, especially private funders. Public funders can be more consistent. Funding organizations are as different as people are. They are quirky, really individualistic. And, they are not necessarily working in a coordinated way. And, yes, despite this, funders do expect community orgs to be very coordinated.

Judy de Barros, Neighbor to Neighbor Fund

- She looks for common mission, vision, values. That's not as easy as it sounds.
- Look to the groups that are taking the time to build the coalition. Look at the relationships in the group. It's hard to take the time to do this, but this is what keeps it sustainable. Need to remember that sustainability isn't just about the money.
- You have to be careful, especially when there are so many diverse projects. You want to be strategic.
- You need to be able to articulate your idea and be able to talk about how you will manage it all. If you can't do it all, you have to figure out how to prioritize it.

LiLi Liu, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation

- When she worked on Weed and Seed, organizing and engaging community members was always a challenge. It was important to make sure that communities of color weren't tokenized. They created an environment where there were opportunities for everyone to participate when the need arose. It was important to show that they had broad support from residents, that there was some structure for decision-making.
- As a funder, she looks for capacity:
 - As a group of volunteers, how do you get work done?
 - If there is a deadline, who is actually going to put the grant together? Who will manage it once it comes through?
 - Can you articulate what you want to do and how to do it?
 - Can you not be spread too thin, with only a few people doing things?
- It's hard to be good at many, many things, especially when you are starting out. Need to prioritize. You can start by drawing on the strengths of the people primarily involved.
- Need to think about what your short- and long-term priorities are. Need to think about how you are sequencing things. This is especially important with longer-term issues, especially if you need to engage with the City or other major partners.

Lori Guilfoyle, United Way of King County

- To her, the term 'high performing organizations' means that you are connected to the community you are serving. It's not necessarily about having the best financials, policies, etc. in place. It's that the community is part of the work that you do.
 - There are tensions at United Way about some of this. Some of the funding is for very grassroots work.
- It's really important that leadership is from the community, that you are working to build resources in the community.
- It's not about trying to do everything. Need to build on strengths and partnerships to be able to leverage resources.

Questions:

How do we maintain all of the ideas and have people feel like their idea is represented without having an over-ambitious plan?

- Alice: The community has many priorities, many hopes and dreams. Maybe the strongest function needed is to keep track of who else is working in each of these priority areas. Look to see who might already be well-established. Find organizations and groups doing some of this work. List or map out who there is, what are their roles, how you are connected to those organizations. Create a network-connection sort of tool. The gaps that are revealed will tell a lot.
- Judy: If you talk about everything too generally, funders don't know what to grab onto. With funders, you need to be really clear. Solid community relationships will anchor everything you're doing. Look for the value proposition in organizational and group

partnerships: what's in it for you, what's in it for them? Coming together with a common set of values is really important. Be strategic.

- Lori: Just as neighborhood plans will have different parts, funders are also interested in different things. You need to see where there are intersections of specific pieces of the plan or a component of the community and see where there can be energy around bringing things together. Need to strategize to get greater impact. For example, United Way doesn't fund the environment, but if there is afterschool program on science or math, United Way could be interested in that.

Are we catching the emergence of the concept of place-based funding at the beginning or the end?

- Judy: There is a lot of federal focus on this right now. The Seattle Foundation has started looking at this, but they haven't come up with an articulated plan yet.
- Alice: There is also a 'collective impact' model/approach that is appearing in journals. This is about getting people together who are all affected or concerned by a place or issue.
- Nora: We are trying to really link the planning to the geography...this is different from before.
- Lori: This collective impact approach has been not so much place-based, but issue-based. But, if you look, for example, at the Knight Foundation's work, you can see that place matters. United Way won't fund environmental issues, but you have to look at the environment when you look at food, housing, etc. The building of place and of the capacity of people in that place is the important part.
 - A local effort where place matters: Lake Hills Community in Bellevue. The City of Bellevue built new sidewalks, etc. At the same time, the school district built a new school in this area. At the same time, the King County Housing Authority was looking at what was going on and brought in resources so that people weren't displaced as a result of the re-development work. They created neighborhood coalitions and resident councils. People now have relationships that they wouldn't have had before.
 - The Knight Foundation's Soul of the Community report has good information about the importance of place.
- LiLi: There are opportunities like Promise Neighborhoods, which is based largely on the Harlem Children's Zone's work. At the Gates Foundation, they aren't really looking at place-based efforts, but, at the same time, they are. For example, Gates is involved with the Road Map Project, an education initiative in South King County.

If this place-based work is an emerging thing, there is probably more tolerance for creativity in what we put together.

- Judy: If you are thinking about doing big place-based work and will be seeking federal monies, you'll need to have more institutional partners, community development partners, etc., and you'll need to leverage these relationships. Some of this is about deciding what kind of level of impact you want to have. If you are going to go after big funding, you'll need to keep in mind that there can be timeline-pressure: funders push a lot, they don't really understand how community development really works and they don't necessarily allow for the time needed to do that community-building work. You need to be ready to take all this

on. But, it could be that some among you don't want to take this on, so you will need to think this through, think about how big you want this to be.

- Lori: Place-based work can also be small.
 - In Walla Walla, a community group identified the three neighborhoods with the most 911 calls. In one spot, there had been a plot of land with trailers where there was a lot of drug activity. Now, there is a park that all the neighborhood members – from kids to adults – use actively. It started as a project to reduce 911 calls and has resulted in a really dynamic project.
 - In San Diego, partners (including the Jacob's Center for Innovation, Jacobs Family Foundation and other funders) are implementing a project around and over a dry creek bed that ran through a blighted area.
- Judy: You need to be able to define Rainier Beach because, it's pretty big geographically – South Park, Skyway, White Center, etc. You need to make it not seem impossible to funders.
- Nora: We started the process by asking people questions about where they shop, recreate, etc. to identify what geographical areas stood out. There are three that the neighborhood plan is focusing on:
 - Rainier And Rose
 - Beach Square
 - historic business district
- Lori: Think about leveraging community assets, and think about funding in an innovative way because funding is hard right now. For example, there was a food bank that had received 100% of its donations from private individuals. But then they started looking differently at what they do and began measuring health indicators. Now, they get funding from health foundations. Think about the indicators you want to change.
- Lori: Many funders are starting to talk to each other about funding collaborative. There is Neighbor to Neighbor, Latino Community Fund. There had been the Building Resilience Fund. If you begin to have a plan that has a vision and phases, selling that to a group of funders will be easier for you to manage and will push funders to think about how they fund community work. Funders are interested in looking at similar places where they do funding. Find those leverage points.
- Judy: Focus on the results, and try not having too many. It might be good to focus on community work (with organizations like Rainier Beach Community Empowerment Coalition, Vietnamese Friendship Association, etc.). Conduct a survey and find the three or four things that rise to the top as the community's greatest concerns and then focus on these. It's not that you can't do the other things, but you need to be strategic in the message. Messaging is really important, to both the community and to funders. You need to make sure the message doesn't sound different coming from different people.
- LiLi: Once you figure out what those priorities are, that's when you map out the funding prospects. Don't pursue the funding first. You are doing this right right now by figuring it out first, and then finding the funding partnerships. For example, as a funder of educational work, she needs to be able to see that it rolls up to a larger plan, that educational initiatives aren't happening on their own separate of other community needs/work.

Funders get bombarded with lots of requests. Is there 'eye candy,' something to make a proposal look different, stand out? What do you look at first? What makes something stand out?

- Alice: Some funders are looking for something innovative, creative, but that is not the case with all funders. Think of funders as people who care about something. But, really, all funders care about what is important to them (the funder). Be sure to look at funders' websites. Of course, funders think they are clear about expressing what their priorities are, but some are better than others in communicating this. You should look for clues about what funders think they are saying about what they care about. Think of this as an act of interpretation. Rainier Beach is rich in this way, because this happens literally here. You have rich resources of people who know what it's like to have to interpret things. Use your communication skills to see how you can connect with funders over what they care about. But, please also don't take it too personally if you don't get a call back.
- Judy: Communications works better than marketing. Build on relationships; talk to people. You can always call and try to talk to the program officer. You won't always get a response, but you should try. Think of it like outreach.
- LiLi: Be smart about how you are approaching funders.
- Lori: Also, remember that some people prefer phone conversations, some prefer email. Learn the best way of contacting individuals/funders. Try to understand that balance and tension.
- Judy: Read the website. Pay attention to what they say. If they don't accept proposals, don't send one in.

Odds and ends...

- LiLi: How are decisions being communicated with residents now? As long as you are communicating back to people, that can go towards building community cohesiveness.
 - Nora: We have touched over 700 people who speak many languages. The main way of communicating is through the website, POLs and NAC members. We will have another meeting in February and then start forming action teams around particular projects related to the plan.
 - Sebhat: This is what the community is grappling with, how to continue this in the future.
- Judy: If something doesn't make the priorities list, think of creating criteria for determining what to do, what you will take on. It's not just about what is fundable. It's about ideas that are endorsed by the community. Pick decision-making criteria and be careful about them. You don't want the perception that the NAC is making all the selections/decisions.