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Jay T. Brennan
Illinois State University

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ORGANIZATIONAL ACCOMPLISHMENTS & CHALLENGES OF THE MILWAUKEE COMMUNITY SERVICE CORPS

JAY T. BRENNAN

ILLINOIS STATE UNIVERSITY

MAY 7, 2003

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ABSTRACT

In this capstone paper I describe the history and nature of the youth corps movement and also my personal experiences as a project design coordinator with the Milwaukee Community Service Corps (MCSC). Accomplishments and challenges are explored from this perspective relying on the community development literature as well as my expertise in community development to support the findings. I highlight several methods for overcoming some of the fundamental challenges faced by organizations such as a service corps and their funding agencies. I conclude the paper by arguing that the organization serves the City of Milwaukee in numerable ways and with some changes could further advance its relevance for the future.

The MCSC is an historic descendent of the Civilian Conservation Corps of the 1930s. Designed as was its ancestor as a program to provide opportunity for the needy and unemployed, it began operating in 1991 as part of the Urban Corps Expansion Project and under strong leadership from Mr. Antonio M. Perez. It was particularly designed to work with at risk youth ages 18-23 and to develop among them a "virtue of work and ethic of social responsibility".

During my tenure at MCSC we enjoyed many successes. We built several partnerships, increased our technological capacities, introduced new recruiting methods, and improved curricula design. We also failed to achieve many others, sometimes because the organization lacked the autonomy for effective action and sometimes because of ineffective leadership.

In conclusion, I ask what it would take to make the organization more effective, so that it can more productively reach its estimable goals. Should it, and could it, become more of a grassroots organization? How can it build an autonomous funding base to allow it to become a more effective community partner?

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The following Capstone project is the culmination of the "central experience" of Illinois State University's Peace Corps / Applied Community Development Fellows Program, an 11-month community placement as Project Design Coordinator at the Milwaukee Community Service Corps. These experiences were made more meaningful and fruitful by the tireless effort of Illinois State University (ISU), MCSC staff, friends, donors, the City of Milwaukee and most of all the Corpsmembers. I express my gratitude to all of those who made the professional practice at MCSC possible, specifically ISU Professor Dr. Bob Hunt, Applied Community Development Placement Coordinator Jim Nelson, MCSC Director Christopher J. Litzau, and Housing Authority City of Milwaukee Director Tony M. Perez.

HISTORY OF YOUTH CORPS

This work describes the operation of the Milwaukee Community Service Corps [MCSC] over the period of a single year, and my work as an intern with the organization. Much of what can be reported about the organization is unique, reflecting particular circumstances and decisions. However, the activities, the problems and the potential draw on historic experience—of more than half a decade of effort to promote new opportunities for those needing support in the transition to adulthood—and a transition to gainful employment. A brief overview of this history may be useful in introducing some of the main factors at work in Milwaukee.

Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC*)*

More than 100 Service and Conservation Corps trace their roots back to the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) of the 1930s. The CCC was one of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's efforts to create jobs for young men left without work by the Great Depression. More than six million young men have served in the CCC.

Youth Conservation Corps (YCC)

Although the CCC was disbanded in 1942, it was revived in 1957, when the Student Conservation Association (SCA) sent college students to national parks and forests as volunteers. In the late 60's the Senate used the SCA model as the framework for legislation that created the Youth Conservation Corps (YCC). At the YCC's peak in the mid-1970s they received as much as $60 million and recorded 32,000 Corpsmembers every summer through State, Department of Interior and Department of Agriculture run programs. Corpsmembers worked in both cities and park areas around the U.S., working on various conservation projects including a number of activities including tree planting, river clean up and erosion control.

Young Adult Conservation Corps (YACC)

The Young Adult Conservation Corps (YACC), initiated in the late 70's at a larger scale than the YCC, the YACC afforded young people year-long employment and education opportunities in conservation related fields. YACC had an annual appropriation of $260 million and also had both federal and state run projects.

In 1981 the YCC and the YACC were by and large eliminated by dramatic budget cuts. Yet, the youth conservation corps concept was well established through state funded projects. Former California Governor Jerry Brown launched the first California Conservation Corps in 1976. By 1985 conservation corps were operating in Iowa, Ohio, Maryland, Minnesota, New Jersey, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Vermont, Washington and Wisconsin.

Urban Conservation and Service Corps

It was in 1983 the youth corps movement took on a new approach with the inception of the Urban Conservation Corps Programs. California led the way by starting the first of the urban conservation corps in Marin County, Oakland and San Francisco and added seven more in the following years. In 1985 California's local corps programs were fortified through the passage of the California Bottle Act which allocated funding for local corps recycling projects.

The following year New York City instituted the City Volunteer Corps and diversified the program by involving young adults in providing both human services and conservation work. Throughout the 1980's even without federal funding new state and local corps were developing programs throughout the country.

Urban Corps Expansion Project (UCEP)

The Urban Corps [UCEP] was sponsored as a national demonstration project through contributions from many large foundations including Ford, Kellogg, Hewlett, Mott, Rockefeller, and the DeWitt Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund. This initiative would result in the development of urban corps programs in 10 U.S. cities, building on the "best practices" of the established corps programs. The first of these UCEP programs became operational in the fall of 1990. The Milwaukee Community Service Corps was part of this initiative and began their operations on February 12, 1991.

Federal National and Community Service Funds

In 1992 the youth corps saw their first direct federal funding in over a decade. President Bush's Commission on National and Community Service provided over $22 million in grants to 23 states, the District of Columbia, the Los Angeles Conservation Corps (for Disaster Relief) and 5 Indian tribes. These funds were accessed through the American Conservation and Youth Service Corps Act or Subtitle C of the National and Community Service Act of 1990. Although, only half of the established corps programs directly benefited from these funds the number of corps programs nearly doubled to over 100.

Under President Clinton, the National Community Service Trust Act was passed, providing federal support to community service programs other than traditional youth corps—through what is now known as AmeriCorps. But the youth corps did benefit: In September 1994, AmeriCorps first year, 53 youth corps were recipients of AmeriCorps grants through statewide population-based and competitive processes as well as through a national direct application process and collaborations with federal agencies. MCSC was one of the recipients of an AmeriCorps grant, and received funding under this program for roughly half a decade.

In 1999, 108 year-round and summer youth corps operated in 32 states. Collectively they enrolled over 23,000 people, who provided 14.7 million hours of service to their communities. Of the 23,000+ corpsmembers, nearly 6,000 were also AmeriCorps members.

Today's Youth Service Corps

Today's youth corps feature crews of young adults working together along the Hank Aaron Trail in Milwaukee, and in over 200 other locations throughout the United States. Corps programs are working to make a difference for their communities and their corpsmembers. The young men and women who serve in corps are mainly disadvantaged youth who have grown up in poverty, had little success in traditional schooling and struggled with unemployment. Young adults serving in the corps develop self-confidence and motivation, acquire useful work skills, and earn academic credentials.

A majority of corps members come to the program looking for a second chance to succeed in life. The young people are led by crew supervisors who serve as mentors and role models as well as technical trainers and supervisors. They work in crews of 8-12 to carry out a wide range of conservation, urban infrastructure improvement and human service projects. In return for their efforts to restore and strengthen their communities corps members receive: 1) a minimum-wage-based stipend, 2) classroom training to improve basic competencies and, if necessary, to secure a General Education Degree or High School Equivalency Diploma , 3) on-the-job experiential and environmental education, which corps generally call "work-learning", 4) generic and technical job skills training, 5) a wide range of supportive services, and 6) in some cases, a post-service educational award.

Disadvantaged young people are often described as the recipients of services. In the corps young people provide service to the community, and they gain self-respect, education, and skills from their experience.

Unlike the CCC, corps programs are state and local programs, which have developed without a reliable source of federal funding. Consequently, corps programs are generally entrepreneurial organizations, necessarily calling on leadership skilled at accessing public resources not usually destined for services to out-of-school youth. In the year 2000, corps programs disbursed a total of $308 million nationwide. A third of this funding was secured through federal sources and much of the rest came from state, county and municipal appropriations. Foundation and corporate grants and considerable "sponsored work" or fee-for-service revenue generated through contracts with public and private agencies added some additional resources.

Corps programs generally develop a versatile funding base and are cost-effective programs that allow young people to accomplish important conservation, community restoration and human service work, while also developing employment and citizenship skills. A recent multi-site control group evaluation by Abt Associates/Brandeis University found significant benefits for corpsmembers, especially young African-American men. Among the findings were:

- significant employment and earnings gains accrued to young people who join a corps;
- participation in high-risk behavior declined;
- arrest rates dropped by one third among all corpsmembers; and
- out-of-wedlock pregnancy rates dropped among female corpsmembers.

Youth corps programs have the capacity to accomplish what policy-makers on both sides of the aisle have asked for, a program providing youth an opportunity to serve their community and country while developing the skills and values necessary to seek career opportunities and earn financial autonomy.*

* Much of the "History of the Youth Corps" was adapted from a Study by Abt Associates at http://www.AmeriCorps.org/research/pdf/ccc_youth_0596.pdf or summarized from the National Association of Service and Conservation Corps at http://www.nascc.org/history2.shtml.

The Milwaukee Community Service Corps

As noted, the MCSC is in many ways similar to other corps programs. It has as a primary goal promoting the virtue of work and the ethic of social responsibility among young adults' ages 18-23 years. It needs, counts on, and generally has received the support of community members and organizations. As a result, the MCSC has been able to serve the people of Milwaukee for more than a decade.

The Milwaukee Community Service Corps, Inc. is a 501 (c) (3) not-for-profit corporation. It was incorporated on May 25, 1990 and began operations on February 12, 1991 as part of the UCEP initiative. MCSC was founded and guided by Antonio "Tony" M. Perez from its inception through its first decade. Currently Mr. Perez is the Director of the Housing Authority of the City of Milwaukee (HACM) and MCSC enjoys a special relationship with HACM. MCSC is directed by Christopher J. Litzau.

Mission: The Milwaukee Community Service Corps focuses attention on primarily low income, ethnically and racially diverse 18-23 year olds to reshape their community. It seeks to reshape young citizens through the customized integration of high value work, education, job training, career exploration, life skills, and personal development, to produce permanently employed, fully engaged members of the Milwaukee Community. In this it resembles the Civilian Conservation Corps, using community service work as the means for training and employing jobless and underemployed youth.

Participants in the corps are called 'corpsmembers'. MCSC provides corpsmembers with the opportunity to serve their neighbors and communities while earning a regular paycheck. The specific tasks performed by MCSC corpsmembers enhances the economic viability of Milwaukee and enables corpsmembers to be both producers, through community service, and consumers, by learning from experience, within the corps.

Corpsmembers are often young people who are 'at-risk' of becoming dependent on one form of public aid or another. Recognizing capacity rather than deficiencies MCSC strives to tap potential areas of growth in 'at-risk' youth that may have been overlooked or underdeveloped in other facets of their lives. By building upon what young people can do imparts ownership and value to their person, thus providing an avenue of change from 'at-risk' to 'at-promise' young adults.

Corpsmembers are generally young people who reside in Milwaukee and live at or below 150% of the poverty level. Entry requirements are a minimum of skills and standards: good physical condition, including passing a drug test, and the ability and willingness to work hard.

During the corpsmembers time with MCSC, each corpsmember receives a modest wage, about $5.25 per hour, for up to 40 hours per week. Corpsmembers are active participants in a detailed, structured work and education-based environment that places a premium upon discipline and camaraderie. Corpsmembers spend at least 30 hours working on-site and spend 10 hours in classroom and practical life skills education.

As a member of a "crew" guided by a crew supervisor (staff) and a crew leader (corpsmembers recognized for performance and merit), each participant works in up to five categories and attends required education and training sessions. The education session combines academics with life-skills activities. Corpsmembers rotate within the five MCSC-established categories of work, which include urban rehabilitation and construction, urban conservation and landscaping, human service projects, the arts and entrepreneurial projects.

MCSC Core Programs:

1) Urban Conservation:
   Landscaping, Greening, Recycling and Environmental Services, Community Gardening, Lead Abatement, River Maintenance
2) Urban Restoration:
   Housing Rehab/Construction, Flatwork Concrete, Lead Abatement, Brownfield Remediation

3) Human Services:
Lead Poisoning Prevention Outreach and Education, and other Community Organizing\
4) Entrepreneurial Pursuits:
Environmental Services, Brownfield Social Ventures

My Role at MCSC

Though I had other choices, as an economic development professional in an economically dynamic suburb of a major city, I chose to work with the MCSC. It offered me an opportunity to work at the grassroots level in an urban area. I looked forward to a chance to apply the youth development skills I learned with the Peace Corps and ISU in Milwaukee. I felt it would be a valuable experience to compare and contrast youth development in Koropara, Guinea, West Africa with that of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, USA.

I felt my experiences in Africa would be a valuable asset in my work with 'at-risk' youth in Milwaukee. Indeed I was correct and the professional practice afforded me many opportunities to learn from the corpsmembers wealth of experiences much in the same way Peace Corps had allowed me to learn from the rich knowledge of the Kpele people of Guinea.

As an Illinois State University Peace Corps Fellow completing a Professional Practice in Community Development with the MCSC, my initial job description called for me to be responsible for uniting field based vocational skills with classroom education components in a vocational coordinator role to maximize comprehension and youth development of the young adult. In addition, I was to serve as mentor to intervene and provide direction to young adults, assisting with the design and oversight of operations to ensure maximum efficiency of service delivery at MCSC, and assist with project-specific initiatives to coordinate multiple partners and young adults serving to improve their community. Essentially, I began working for the MCSC as vocational coordinator in an expressed effort to learn of existing resources, build trust, and unite the appropriate resources to strengthen overall corpsmember performance in the program.

The role quickly changed into what the MCSC director described as that of a 'utility man' responsible for a variety of previously undefined tasks that were not visible until the apparent demand had arisen. This worked well for me, as I was able to improve my ability to deliver services, track corpsmembers activities and a complete host of other achievements that will be described in more detail in the following section. The professional practice was ultimately a success both for MCSC and me in that I feel both the agency and I were able to adapt to existing circumstance and improve community service skills producing tangible and intangible improvements at MCSC.

Yet: things didn't start out the best for me at MCSC. It's hard to forget any first-day at a new workplace although this one was something special. As I tried to introduce myself as the new Peace Corps Fellow at the MCSC headquarters I felt strongly that few knew [or cared] what I might be doing. Later on it became clear that no-one even knew of my arrival that day. I sat in the lobby at the direction of the executive assistant and waited for the director to arrive. After about an hour I joined a crew supervisor named Kix who was leaving with a small group of corpsmembers to put the finishing touches on the "Corps House", at Kilbourn and 25th, a project that had been in the works for a number of years and was nearing completion. When completed the 'corps house' would provide housing for a number of corpsmembers at a very affordable rate.

This first day revealed many of the attitudes the crew supervisors and corpsmembers work with on a daily basis, a rosy picture of helping disadvantaged youth develop job skills was regularly confronted with a less pleasant reality. Granted it was about 95 degrees on an early August day, but nevertheless the first impression of a corpsmember was one that left me with a feeling these young people were there against their will, or at least lacking in full understanding of what was possible. My naïve, idealistic and optimistic belief that this grassroots non-profit organization would be run with the same organized method I enjoyed at the United States Peace Corps was 'dashed from the start'.

In any event, that first day featured hard work, involving the installation of a mailbox, laying of several yards of sod and many pounds of mulch, cleaning up around the 'corps house'—and more. The whole time I wondered why the corpsmembers were not doing much of the work. Later, around 3:45 we returned to operations and I was introduced to all the crew supervisors as the individual who was supposed to 'marry field-work with class-work?' For the following month I spent everyday out in the field working and getting to know crew supervisors and corpsmembers, realizing that marrying field-work and class-work would not be feasible until I had a better understanding of field-work through some hands-on experience. Crew supervisors were glad to have my help as they were often expected to work late to complete work the corpsmembers were unable to finish.

Crew supervisors were, in fact, under considerable pressure from the director and the work projects coordinator to complete contracts in a timely manner. MCSC's contractors didn't tend to embrace the fact that MCSC was a program designed to work with 'at-risk' youth to develop job skills—they just wanted results. At any rate, I worked as a corpsmember arriving at operations, via public transportation, around 7:15 a.m. to go through role call, physical training and then joining whichever crew I would be working with that day. The entire time I was assuming no role of authority, keeping a journal and observing the culture of the corps. Working in this manner created a lot of questions among staff members and corpsmembers who thought, regardless of my attempts to explain otherwise, I was training to be a crew supervisor, only after repeated introductions and explanations at weekly management meetings was my role somewhat understood. Although to be honest, neither the director nor I knew what my role was or would become at this point. The role I was to assume would be left largely up to me, unbeknownst to me at this time.

Over the first month I came to appreciate and understand that the glue holding everything together at MCSC was in fact the corpsmembers. To be sure, there were a few 'bad apples', but I felt that negative behavior in many cases could be traced to problems in the environment these individuals had faced at home, in their past and their

present, among other things. They often had trouble realizing--these often hardened and hurt individuals--that they possessed some sort of intangible power that could transform the MCSC into an effective and sustainable community. Evaluators who don't spend more than a couple of weeks working in the field with the corpsmembers are incapable of evaluating the corps accurately. My initial impression of corpsmembers who didn't want to be at the MCSC was true of some, as was described earlier, yet was easily confused as many first impressions are. The field-work experience allowed me to form some substantial relationships with corpsmembers and staff that may have been non-existent had I not spent significant time in the field. This made me realize early on that even though the daily rigors of work at MCSC seemed grueling I was very fortunate to meet these corpsmembers who made everyday exciting and memorable.

Working ever more effectively with the corpsmembers was the most significant accomplishment of my time at MCSC. This is one of those intangibles that usually go without being measured. By working alongside corpsmembers they would begin to share their feelings of life and many other things including their opinion of the corps. For example one corpsmember named Darmain commented, "This is bullshit, we don't make no money. I worked four weeks, over 60 hours and got $100. I don't learn shit in class." Consequently, Darmain quit the program and about 8 months later Darmain returned to MCSC looking for work. This experience is exemplary of so many relationships with the corps, a love-hate relationship. Most corpsmembers who end up feeling positively about their experiences at MCSC have had time for reflection—and real life experiences. In many cases corpsmembers returned to MCSC to continue some pursuit, others moved on to jobs, some went right back to destructive ways, and still others went back to school. I learned that opportunities afforded me through field-work to both closely interact with corpsmembers and later to weigh the issues facing MCSC was invaluable in understanding the everyday dueling perceptions of how things ought to be and how they are at the corps. These relationships and efforts to process what I had seen were invaluable in allowing me to stay motivated in the face of what often seemed like countless managerial and human dilemmas.

I concluded my in Milwaukee feeling that the Milwaukee Community Service Corps provides a valuable service for the 'at-risk' youth of Milwaukee. No matter how frustrating the workday could be, there was no doubt the work was just and valid enough to continue. Very many of the Corpsmembers grew significantly and in various ways—if sometimes only after a long time. I changed to; for it was through the establishment of relations with corpsmembers and staff members working in the field that I was able to apply my classical knowledge of community development at MCSC, to recognize its validity and limits, and thus to grow as a professional and a person.

ACCOMPLISHMENT AT MCSC

As I look back on the year, I do see some remarkable accomplishments, ones I can take some credit for, and others that are much better described as organizational accomplishments. These outcomes need to be identified, and then contrasted with outcomes that were less positive, which will be assessed later. This latter assessment, along with the listing of successes, should indicate lessons we all learned--and suggest ways this organization can continue to progress toward meeting its important mission.

Partnership Building

In an effort to assist with project-specific initiatives to coordinate multiple partners and young adults serving to improve their community, I brokered several significant partnerships; first with Marquette University through their service learning initiative, secondly with Transcenter a transitional residential for recently released criminals and last with the Milwaukee Area Technical College (MATC). In addition to my efforts other partnerships were also developed for instance with the Milwaukee School for Community Service, REACH a local Milwaukee non-profit, the Wisconsin Conservation Corps, Denali Initiative and YouthBuild USA.

Service Learning: The partnership with Marquette University stemmed from the fact that MCSC had one tutor, Gloria Anilla who was an AmeriCorps VISTA volunteer, and who was nearing the end of her service. The reason MCSC wanted tutors was

largely because of the broad disparity of educational attainments of our corpsmembers. Often they were not prepared for the level of material being covered by our limited educational staff. Consequently, I worked on establishing relationships with local institutions in order to obtain volunteers. I spoke to anyone and everyone, including the Volunteer Center of Milwaukee, the Lutheran Volunteer Corps, the Journal Sentinel, the University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee, Marquette University, America Reads, the Pre-College Academy, St. Benedict Church, and the Senior Corps. I quickly learned that tutors are scarce in Milwaukee. I created some flyers and posted them anywhere I was allowed seeking tutors, volunteers and/or mentors with little success. Finally, Carole Ferrara, the Director of Marquette University's Trinity Fellow's Program referred me to Kim Jensen with the University's Institute for Urban Life Service Learning Program. Ms. Jensen and Marquette University agreed to have MCSC as a member of their service learning program which produced hundreds of volunteers for the Milwaukee community every year. Marquette's program allowed students to fulfill a portion of course requirements through about two hours of service learning a week throughout the semester.

Although, this partnership didn't result in tutors, MCSC did receive voluntary assistance in many human resource areas. For example we received a service learner studying sociology, she was placed on the blue crew as a 'mentor' although she worked and participated very much like a corpsmember. We developed and subscribed the mentor position based on the belief that MCSC could offer more diversity to the corpsmembers. We felt in order for a corpsmember to change in a positive way requires that they can rationalize their own existence through comparison with alternative lifestyles. At MCSC our demographic was static; generally corpsmembers were continually being guided by individuals who came from the same background, working in the same Milwaukee neighborhoods they came from. This was not entirely the case, but adding diversity wherever possible, we felt, would create different opportunities. Also by having Marquette students who are roughly the same age as corpsmembers working with corpsmembers would provide some differing views and opinions challenging corpsmembers to broaden their perspectives. William Julius Wilson

describes this through dilemma of a static environment in an interview with an African-American CEO of an inner city Chicago wholesale firm. Wilson asks him to describe the effects of living, or in the case of corpsmembers, living and working in a highly concentrated poverty area. The CEO responded:

> So, you put… a bunch of poor people together, [rushed and emphatic] I don't give a damn if whether they're white, green or grizzly, you got a bad deal. You're going to create crime and everything else that's under the sun, dope. Anytime you put all like people together—and particularly if they're low level—you destroy them. They not, how you going to expect… one's going to stand up like a flower? He don't see no reason to stand up. When he gets up in the morning he sees people laying around doing nothing. He goes to bed at night, the same damn thing. All they think of, do I get to eat and sleep?" (Wilson, 1996, p.130)

We felt mentoring was a success. When the service learner was with the crew to which she was assigned, it appeared this brought some new understanding to all those involved. When her service was over I remember her telling me she really enjoyed spending time with the corpsmembers and that she learned much more from them than they did from her, an equal learning experience.

Other service learners worked in human resources. For example, I worked with a group of five students who developed a tutorial for staff members on how our new 'Track 'Em' database functioned. The students experience culminated in a staff wide tutorial that introduced the new database and its functions. Also, our fiscal manager worked closely with a service learner to rework outdated fiscal procedures. The pilot partnership with Marquette University was an overall success and MCSC is looking forward to their second year with service learning. Staff met to explore new areas that service learning may be useful for MCSC and new job descriptions were developed. Kim Jensen visited a weekly management meeting at MCSC to do a survey of our program assets and field questions about Marquette's program. Before MCSC had almost no relationship with

Marquette University and now through some simple partnership building MCSC has a very stable source of volunteers for as long as they continue to participate.

This collaboration was invaluable to MCSC largely because it required a lot of thought and creativity on the part of staff members concerning how they could use a volunteer effectively for two hours a week for a short period of time. If Marquette felt our job descriptions failed to fulfill course requirements then there could not be a service learner forthcoming for that specific job. Consequently, staff is unable to request a service learner without thoroughly thinking the position through. They had to create and manage an experience that would be directly relevant to a specific course of study. This is why the mentor position worked so well for the sociology course, the environment for learning, the crew, was readily available.

Also, this experience introduced the idea of service learning to staff members as a tool for development. Initially there was not a lot of interest from staff. After seeing the successes from the effective use of the service learning program staff members now were anxiously anticipating the next opportunity to apply for a service learner. I remember initially I wrote most all of the job descriptions and requested that other staff members supply me with their job descriptions and I received very few. By the end of the year all departments had job descriptions ready or ideas in mind for the following semester of service learning.

This specific example highlights how effective use of volunteers can be instrumental in the growth of staff capacity, not only at MCSC but anywhere. All too often organizations receive volunteers only to shove them in a back room doing work no one wants to do. If you take the time to assess their abilities the effort will result in a much more rewarding relationship for all those involved. Partnership building isn't free help it is about developing relationships that are sustainable. .

I also feel this effort may have inspired our director to seek out more volunteer opportunities because shortly after I introduced the service learning initiative to him he brought on several volunteers from the New School for Community Service an

alternative city of Milwaukee high school. This effort resulted in some traditional volunteer work and also one exceptional volunteer named Zac Witte who was instrumental in helping me develop and implement MCSC's new learning lab which will be discussed later.

Transcenter: After conversations with the director of the Wisconsin Conservation Corps (WCC), I was next referred to the Transcenter. The Transcenter provides transitional housing for former prisoners attempting to re-assimilate back into society. Their director, Ken Harper, wanted to provide some work opportunities for the Transcenter residents, and since the MCSC needed help completing our landscaping projects with HACM, we felt this could be a good partnership. We developed a collaborative program that would benefit both programs. The MCSC would receive assistance on our work projects and Transcenter residents will have an opportunity to get out of the institution helping them begin the transition from prison life to civil society. Transcenter has the support of the WCC which does not operate in Milwaukee but agreed to sponsor the Transcenter crew. WCC will pay the Transcenter crew wages; provide a crew leader, transportation and education awards. MCSC would only have to provide the work. This project was just beginning when my professional practice ended, although MCSC was very hopeful this new partnership would lead to the WCC directly sponsoring MCSC crews.

AmeriCorps Education Awards: MCSC was a member of AmeriCorps until roughly September of 2001. This federally supported community service program provided stipends and education awards of nearly five thousand dollars for many of our corpsmembers who successfully enrolled into their program and fulfilled the programs hourly work requirements. At first AmeriCorps rules appeared to rule nearly seven in ten of our Corpsmembers ineligible; for they had not completed their High School Equivalency Degree (HSED), nor received a General Education Degree (GED) and thus could not use the education funds to pursue work in higher education. In fact, many had less than a fifth grade education. However, I read the AmeriCorps education award bi-laws and discovered that the recipient of an award who has been independently assessed

to be unable to obtain a GED/HSED has the ability to apply the award toward any Title IV institution providing for these individuals. Immediately I arranged to meet with Andrew Hopgood Dean of Basic Skills at the Milwaukee Area Technical College (MATC) and found he could provide more than 500 special education programs. Programs of that sort would provide our corpsmembers an opportunity not only to continue the pursuit of their GED/HSED but an opportunity to undertake vocational studies that could very well lead to more viable job opportunities than would the pursuit of a traditional education.

Mr. Hopgood and I discussed various possibilities of enrolling a corpsmember at MATC. We also considered ways of developing a 'vocational track' at MCSC where MATC teachers would provide training to corpsmembers. The current GED/HSED educational track was considered highly unrealistic by our director since MCSC would be expected to raise some corpmembers attainment by as much as ten grade levels in a one year period. He preferred focusing on teaching vocational skills rather than encouraging the pursuit of the often unobtainable goal of a GED/HSED. The problem with his conclusion is that little funding support can be found for his preferred option.

It would suggest failure to end on that note but this is not the case. The process of partnering was a success, despite the early setbacks. For instance, we had discovered that the education award could be used without a GED/HSED and a new partnership was subsequently formed with MATC to work on enrolling corpsmembers. MATC had also expressed an interest in working with MCSC to develop a 'vocational track' for our in-house education and also agreed to work with us to provide tutors in the near future. We might also have produced a more effective response to the options for tapping the AmeriCorps education awards. If MCSC were able to find ways to match corpmembers with educational institutions acceptable to AmeriCorps, it could open significant opportunity for young men and women now prevented from securing the education needed for a good job.

Staff Development

One of the greatest challenges face by MCSC was our lack of resources. We had one staff computer that was on our network when I arrived and most of our staff had no access to a computer at all. I built my personal computer from junk parts off of old units. When I left MCSC we had 15 networked computers all with Windows XP and Office XP Professional. We had conducted staff-wide computer database tutorials. And ten new PCs had been added to our offices. Last and more importantly a shift toward using technology and its importance in effectively and efficiently meeting funding standards had been realized within the overall organization.

Database Development: Early in my internship our director challenged me to develop a database system that could be used throughout the corps. I learned what a daunting task this would be when the director copied an Excel file and gave it to me explaining this was his method for tracking grants. At best it was similar to an ancient Egyptian script, only translatable by the director. He asked me to take this list and develop a database that would offer a means to track MCSC friends and donors, as well as government officials. He wanted a database that would provide profiles containing information on birthdates, relatives, and occupations. He also requested a means for summarizing corpsmember achievements, hours worked, profiles, and disciplinary history, among many other things. This database should also allow us to track grant due dates and record information on our previous grant requests. Basically he wanted this database to work interoffice miracles.

In beginning my efforts to prepare the database, I first thought of transferring current records to Access. I quickly realized the limitations of Access which could never be developed into a system that could support even a fraction of the things we wanted to do. Consequently, I refocused my attention to what I felt to be a more important issue facing the development of a database, creating an operational network of computers. When I began working at MCSC we had a total of four computers that had access to the internet and only one of them was available for all staff to use. One computer was our

"server", another was for the use of only our fiscal manager and the last unit was for our director and the fiscal manager's assistant. This left one old tired Mac to service over a dozen staff members.

After developing our network of over 15 PCs I downloaded the new database called 'Track-Em' which was developed and provided by the National Association of Service and Conservations Corps (NASCC). I began by learning the capacity of Track 'Em. The new database would do just about everything we had wanted, particularly in tracking corpsmember activities, and providing a wide range of profiles of friends and donors.

Despite some operational problems, staff members began to appreciate the database and the importance of technology as a tool. Each time a corpsmember had achieved a new goal many staff would report this in the database, then when another staff member was recording data at a latter time they would see all the different accomplishments of that individual. This allowed for a sort of invisible communication among staff concerning corpsmember developments. The fields recorded were not just achievements, disciplinary actions were also documented, creating a transparency within the organization that did not exist before. Behavioral changes within a corpsmember which might previously have gone unrecognized were now made readily available to all staff that supported the development of the database. The database also served to do better reporting and evaluations. The database also provided a daily reporting tool that would eventually result in more streamlined reporting to funding agencies. Ultimately this would result in better relations with funding agencies. With a well developed pool of data; reporting for MCSC could be as simple as pulling the data from the Track 'Em database, instead of what often appeared to be rummaging for data among a stormy sea of documents. The database also provided a better capacity for networking. Any staff member could access any individual staff, donor, corpsmember, etc. contact information from the same place; saving large amounts of time hunting up names and numbers. The new database provided a single place for all this information accessible to all.

Learning Lab: The idea for a learning lab came from a visit to YouthBuild McLean County (YBMC). YBMC was in the process of implementing a new educational software tool called 'NCS Pearson'. The software allowed the user to learn at his or her pace through computer generated exercises. The user takes an assessment test and the software designs exercises in various topics such as grammar, math, reading comprehension and other subjects essential for improving individualized competencies. I felt this technology was a possible solution to MCSC's problems with low educational attainment. After speaking to a NCS Pearson sales representative I learned the software was extremely expensive and receiving grant monies for the program seemed unlikely due to the limited size of our classes. So I went to other community centers which had the similar software, but MCSC could not find any city centers willing to share such assets. From the effort to develop a learning lab I saw the importance of developing some sort of computer lab for the corpsmembers. Essentially the city of Milwaukee's donation of ten computers mentioned earlier was to be used largely for the development of a corpsmember computer lab.

So with the help of Zac Witte a volunteer from the New School for Community Service I organized and networked a functional computer lab of six PCs all networked and on-line, tucked neatly in the back of our only classroom that also doubled as office space for myself, another staff member and a volunteer. It gave our corpsmembers new opportunities to access information and practice keyboarding skills right from the start. The lab was a success because in an effort to get software to allow us to deliver personalized education MCSC's staff developed an appreciation for the use of technology and of the importance of corpsmember access to technology as well. Last, through the development of the corpsmember lab staff members, specifically crew supervisors now had ample access to networked computers making it very easy for all staff members to enter data into the Track 'Em database.

Information Technology (IT) Expansion: I spent numerous hours not only developing a database, seeking better education tools through software like NCS Pearson

and constructing a corpsmember computer lab; I devoted an equal amount of time reorganizing and upgrading staff IT equipment.

As explained earlier we received many new computers and an office space that afforded MCSC the capacity to provide many staff members with their own personal computer with the capacity to sustain software packages such as Microsoft XP. It was my job to move and set up all technology from our previous offices to our new home at Highland Senior Housing Facility. After receiving our ten new PCs from the city and upgrading existing systems, Zac and I were able to construct 15 PCs that were online and able to support Microsoft XP Windows and Office XP Professional. This may not seem like much, but the day I arrived at MCSC general staff had one computer that they could share among them. Today, all staff except our crew supervisor's have their own personal computer, and the corpsmember lab doubles as a crew supervisor work center where they can enter data into Track 'Em and do other work related activities, as mentioned above. Zac and I estimated the entire IT development project at a value, including upgrades in equipment and labor, of around $30,000.

After staff members were provided with better IT, individual and organizational capacities immediately increased through better inter-office communication and reporting. For instance inter-office memos of every sort began to be disseminated by staff members from whom I had never heard from in this manner before. This was made possible through the network printer provided through the aforementioned city donation. Now all staff could type a memo or any office document and send it to the network printer directly from their desk. Before the task of printing a document was arduous because it often required either leaving a work space to go to a computer with a printer; or saving their document to disk and printing it out from a computer with a printer. Consequently many staff members didn't bother trying to communicate, yet now communication had improved greatly.

Headquarter Relocation: MCSC relocated our Headquarters at 1150 East Brady Street and our Work Projects Offices at 3140 West Fond du Lac Avenue to Highland

Senior Housing Facility at 1275 North 17th Street. MCSC went from the commodious St. Hedwig Grade School building in the trendy Milwaukee Brady Street district to essentially a cramped first floor lobby of a HACM senior housing facility.

To put it mildly, we had built up several tons of paperwork and office equipment in our ten plus years at the Brady Street Headquarters. For more than a month staff members and I went through files, stacks of equipment, and general office furnishings. We ended up donating our books to a used book store for resale and dozens of solid wood desks and other equipment were picked up by a waste management company. One corpsmember took home about ten outdated PCs and other corpsmembers took home some furnishings so at least some things went to good use.

Day after day staff and I would mobilize corpsmembers for the move. In several weeks we got the place moved and we were immensely relieved. Yet now we had to organize the new office—in a new narrow circular lobby space of two large rooms, a lounge and some hall space at Highland Senior Housing Facility. It was not going to be an easy process, but luckily we had a floor plan designed by our director's father.

Moving and organizing the office was a monumental effort that came off with no down time. I can think of more than a few problems staff or corpsmembers had as far as being satisfied with this new space and moving, although later I will discuss some problems encountered due to the cramped nature of our quarters, and to our relationships with residents and Highland staff. Still, the MCSC also relieved itself of years of built up excess so the move itself was a major organizational accomplishment.

Program Development

Our director charged me with improving out orientation processes. I accomplished these in three ways; lengthening our orientation process, implementing a new drug testing procedure and devising a new manner of applying and selecting new applicants.

Orientation: Our old orientation was essentially having an individual fill out an application, submit it, take a drug test and if they passed and we needed corpsmembers they were placed on a crew. Orientation was trial by fire. Sometimes new corpsmembers would learn that if they were late this constituted a 'written warning' after so many they could be asked to leave. Others wouldn't even know we offered job placement services through our vocational coordinator among many other services that corpsmembers would have to learn about on their own.

In our new orientation we took the time to get all necessary credentials, such as a driver's license or state identification, social security numbers, birth certificates and other documentation that is required by funding agencies. On many previous occasions this had been overlooked until funding agencies were prepared to recapture funding dollars.

The new orientation also laid down simple policies which required more of the new corpsmember: For instance, if you were late for the orientation or if it appeared that you didn't want to be in the MCSC, then you would not get through training. MCSC provided trainees with bus passes so they could make it to training, explaining that they would need to figure out how they were going to get to the operations building once they became a corpsmember. All of these processes of a new orientation allowed a new trainee opportunity to decide if MCSC was right for them. Before corpsmembers would be brought into the program without any real understanding of what the MCSC was.

Next, we sent orientation groups out into the field to experience first hand through hands on work what work would be like at the MCSC. This made a huge impact because many individuals would quit as soon as they saw how hard the work was and knew the pay was barely over $5.00 an hour. This saved MCSC a lot of time in the office for instance if a trainee didn't make it past a couple of weeks there would be little paper work necessary. Also this helped improve our retention rate through a lower likelihood of a corpsmember dropping out of the program because they were made well aware of what would be expected of them throughout the orientation process.

MCSC had just become a Youthbuild member prior to the implementation of the new orientation and we were trying to bring on as many new members as possible. Our director felt that rolling enrollment, where members came in at all different times, was more appropriate than a group enrollment process. As a result our orientations never took on any real structure as they would usually occur sporadically. Sometimes only a few staff members would conduct the entire orientation for a dozen trainees and this would result in trainees knowing very few staff and even fewer corpsmembers. This resulted in an orientation process that didn't develop the strong support system intended by the original model.

Also during the orientation all trainees would learn of their local, state and federally elected officials and MCSC would register them to vote. Staff would work with trainees in the computer lab typing out letters of introduction from each trainee to their respective officials. This worked very well as often officials would immediately respond. On more than one occasion a corpsmember was able to meet their alderwomen, state representative or other elected official. This not only raised their awareness on the importance of voting but also served as an inspiration to corpsmembers that they were doing something special, something good for themselves and their community.

Ultimately this new orientation was a success. All staff agreed that we were receiving a higher quality corpsmember which we hoped would translate into higher productivity in the field and better outcomes in the classroom.

Drug Testing: At the YouthBuild Conference I learned about the programs and charges of Redwood Toxicology in California. Shortly after returning to Milwaukee MCSC opened an account with Redwood Toxicology that reduced our drug testing fee by thirty-eight dollars, to six dollars per test. At this point our director charged me with developing a new drug testing procedure. Now that each test would cost so little, testing would be done at enrollment and more frequent random tests would also be administered. Because of the lowered costs, MCSC was also able to discontinue the practice of taking the drug test fee out of the corpsmembers check.

I worked with a Highland Senior Housing Facility nurse to administer the testing. She agreed to administer the testing if I prepared a simple procedure for her. Next, I developed a procedure based on guidelines suggested by Redwood Toxicology. Then I gave the resident nurse a tutorial on the procedure of taking the sample, signing waivers and putting the urine samples into the post.

Along with developing testing procedures this led to the introduction of a new philosophy on the purpose of drug testing. The testing was not done to punish corpsmembers, but was a tool to work with Corpsmembers to improve their personal skills. This approach had been suggested and outlined at the Houston YouthBuild conference. Essentially we agreed if a new applicant or corpsmember didn't pass a drug test they are notified immediately. Yet, instead of removing them from the program immediately they are instead no longer allowed to work with equipment, operate vehicles or undertake anything considered hazardous to their person or those around them. Once they pass the drug test their privileges are reinstated. After three positive drug tests the corpsmember is removed from the program.

The affordability of the new drug testing will allow MCSC to implement testing as a youth development tool instead of a random test given once in a while. Also corpsmembers are no longer penalized for having a drug problem. Instead they are encouraged to work through their problem by staff and any other support systems that are available at MCSC. If the corpsmember is able to overcome the drug problem they are still in a position to move forward with their personal development.

Application Review: MCSC felt they had a reputation as being an 'easy place to work' where corpsmembers 'didn't have to do anything'. Aside from a new orientation and drug testing procedure we reviewed our application process.

One of the first problems we faced was how many applicants couldn't fill out an application. I suggested that we require that all applications be filled out at headquarters by the applicant. This eliminated many applicants whose parents had applied for them. Generally these individuals would make poor corpsmembers as the only reason they

would be there is because their parents were forcing them to join. Other individuals were illiterate and unable to fill out the application, thus MCSC felt they required specialized assistance that we could not provide.

The new application process resulted in many staff members reviewing applications and calling in trainees to attend orientation. This was beneficial largely because it made staff feel they had a role in developing what MCSC would be. They became stakeholders in the future of their organization. This would often result in more interest from staff in the orientation process.

The new process was a success because it showed staff how with a little care MCSC could be successful. The application process allowed us to bring on corpsmembers who wanted to be there and individuals with the minimum skills required to succeed at an organization like the MCSC.

Education Development

The last accomplishment came in the area of teaching. I formally taught a Commercial Drivers Licensing (CDL) course most of the time I was with MCSC. I have no formal experience driving commercial vehicles, but the director felt I was the best candidate since I came from an automotive background.

Most corpsmembers at MCSC enter the program without a driver's license. Some have never had one, others have had theirs revoked. MCSC spends a considerable amount of staff time trying to obtain a drivers license for all of our corpsmembers. We often lend small sums to pay off tickets, we invite judges to speak to corpsmembers to teach them how and encourage them to reinstate their licenses. Three mornings a week drivers education was conducted along with a behind the wheel course. When a corpsmember had his license they moved into the CDL course.

The idea of CDL training was not necessarily to obtain a CDL certification for our corpsmembers. It was mostly to prepare them for a possible job opportunity. In order to obtain a CDL certification you must drive a semi and MCSC had no semis so our goal was just to get corpsmembers thinking about CDL as a job possibility. It also gave me a more structured environment to work with corpsmembers.

The CDL training also allowed me to address some of the rolling enrollment problems aside from arguing against it. I developed a highly individualized curriculum that allowed a person to walk into my course and begin working at their own pace immediately.

Lastly, it allowed me to set an example on the importance of structure to other staff members. I did this by developing a structured attendance procedure that resulted in a large graph that was updated weekly and posted in the corpsmember lounge. At first corpsmembers tore down the graph, although gradually they got used to the idea and attendance improved. They became aware that I was aware of their attendance whereas in most other areas no one could accurately attest corpsmembers behavior. I also developed a chart that illustrated corpsmember progress through the CDL exams. All of these procedures were previously unknown to staff at MCSC. At management meetings I would encourage others to illustrate how corpsmembers were progressing.

These teaching policies were successful because they addressed issues of rolling enrollment so corpsmembers could be brought into a class without feeling they were way behind. Also displaying corpsmembers attendance and progress built a certain amount of trust between teacher and student. I didn't punish people because they failed to show up or were not progressing, yet they knew I was paying attention to them. This often resulted in a better student-teacher relationship and improved attendance and progress.

Fulfilling the Professional Practice

Accomplishments in partnership building, staff development, program development and education development allowed me to fulfill many of the responsibilities given to me through the professional practice. They may seem very basic yet they also allowed me to see the fundamental demands of an organization from all these varying perspectives. I realized an organization must develop in an equitable manner that accounts for the many varying contexts of the organization. Yet, more than this I learned how accomplishments reveal challenges within any organization and this will be discussed in more detail in the following sections.

CHALLENGES OF NON-PROFIT MANAGEMENT

In the current literature on nonprofit organizations scholars repeatedly while positive about their contributions, also point to common shortcomings. They find a deficit of introspection, and of evaluation of nonprofit activities; they see a need for careful consideration of issues like accountability and learning. Governance is believed to be given too little attention by these organizations as well. (Edwards & Fowler, 2002, p. 222) What follows here is an effort to further explore the inter-workings of MCSC in a positive spirit—with hope that it may point toward directions for growth and improvement of the nonprofit community as well as of the MCSC. This is relevant because it appears that MCSC has reached a point where its own sustainability as a provider of valued services may be called into question. Like many nonprofits in this changing global environment, it may need to make significant changes. My limited effort here is intended to help sustain MCSC and other organizations in the same position as them and to develop a better understanding of nonprofit management.

Therefore, these more critical comments on MCSC management and operations are supplied only in hopes that it might provide constructive suggestions for change. They are written with respect for the organization, its staff and leaders. It is written in remembrance that human nature is imperfect and subject to error, unable to be omnipresent and not privy to all information, merely able to analyze each situation with

the information afforded, which at times may have been minimal. As Descartes meditates we are all "thinking things", which he describes as a:

> "thing that doubts, understands, affirms, denies, wills, refuses, that imagines also, and perceives… But it will be said that these presentations are false, and that I am dreaming. Let it be so. At all events it is certain that I seem to see light, hear a noise, and feel heat; this cannot be false, and this is what in me is properly called conceiving, which is nothing else than thinking (Descartes, 1941, pp. 34-35)."

So, for all those "thinking things" that may see this thought as flawed, respect this endeavor and remember it could quite easily have been side stepped for more flowery notions and is being done not to slander but to rebuild. An individual's ability to receive outside comment is a first step in a new perception of how they act as agents of change, a first step in rebuilding.

We accomplished many things in the short time I was with the MCSC; the organization was doing a lot of good work for the youth of Milwaukee, although MCSC could have been experiencing many more successes than it did. Two major factors which might, if pursued transparently, have produced more sustainable progress would include changes in the way MCSC approaches leadership and autonomous action.

Non-Profit Leadership & Autonomy

Board of Directors: For any board to be effective in the maintenance of an organization requires that: "the lines between staff and board … be clearly identified and maintained (Dees et al., 2001, p. 32)." The lines of communication at MCSC were frayed on every end.

Starting at the top, MCSC has gone through many organizational changes. The departure of our founder-leader Tony Perez, the imminent relocation, downsizing and consolidation of our work projects and headquarters coupled with the departure of many

staff-members and the subsequent promotion and hiring of new staff created a less than stable environment.

Strong board leadership is particularly important at such times, and under such conditions. Board links to staff are equally important so that all are aware of their role within the organization and how this role fits into the overall vision and mission of the agency. The MCSC board did not meet these standards during my tenure.

Through all of these changes staff never conferred with board members openly. Staff members gained the impression that the board was operating behind closed doors and without concern for the whole organization. Board members were seen by general staff only under very rare conditions—as at the dedication of a new house renovated by corpsmembers to house corpsmembers. On one occasion the board president came to explain a new vision for MCSC at which time he pledged to spend time with all the staff members but he never returned to our offices. Where was the board? Even a list of board members was not easily available, nor was any indication that the board was selected to comply with the goals and directions we had in mind as staff. Overall the board seemed somewhat insensitive to the organization's needs—certainly to the felt needs of staff for direction and general oversight. It did little to make clear its commitment to our mission, and thus to the promoting of commitment and morale.

It was easy to conclude that the MCSC had and has an invisible board that tends to function for the purpose of meeting legal requirements on paper. It appears that the actual functions of governance were carried out by the founder-director and his successor. The failure to have a strong governing board, and a separation of the governance function from that of day to day management is a typical and troubling problem for nonprofits. (Edwards & Fowler, 2002, p. 216) The effects of this are apparent in the data and analysis provided in this paper.

They became even clearer to staff with the appointment of the new director. He lacked the experience and power of the founder-director and certainly for the transition

could have made effective use of more visible and strong board leadership. As a result he needed to seek support from the founder-director, thus further confusing the lines of direction and control. Moreover, it was by no means sure that the two directors, and other key stakeholders on the board and elsewhere shared a common sense of mission; we heard little to challenge such doubts.

These circumstances may explain why the new director attempted an unsustainable expansion through a partnership with HACM in a new Youthbuild program. Staffs such as me were brought on in the hopes of streamlining operations and work projects; actually such streamlining would require professional evaluation and an orchestrated effort by all actors. Financial security was low at MCSC and the last thing we could afford was to further extend ourselves. As we continued to do so by trying to bring on 50 Youthbuild participants and operating out of a undersized office, these attempts began to appear as rather desperate; certainly they seemed to extend MCSC "beyond their carrying capacity" in an effort to encourage a sympathetic response to the MCSC from stakeholders [especially donors]. (Edwards & Fowler, 2002, p. 134) After all, when you shrink staff and office size, and then attempt to expand operations in this fashion, questions need to be raised. Staff members such as myself remained uncertain what the motivations were in such cases, and the MCSC's future would certainly be well served by working to make stakeholder dialogue real, intense and open—and to have it encompass staff involvement.

Existing programs also fell victim to this period of uncertainty and the combined expansion and downsizing. As a result there was a considerable amount of mission drift. Corpsmember education programs were reduced in size and number and field-work was becoming the only achievable outcome. At one point MCSC had no education staff and other staff was teaching a minimal amount of coursework for which they often were not well qualified. As a consequence many corpsmembers were disappointed as many had joined in order to obtain a GED/HSED and they felt they were not receiving the education they had been assured through literature that was outdated and perhaps misleading.

MCSC also lost its contract with AmeriCorps during a period just prior to this. The loss can be largely attributed to leadership problems. MCSC had done little to demonstrate performance required under AmeriCorps standards. Had our board developed internal checks and balances to oversee requirements, standards and reporting methods may have been developed. Granted many staff felt AmeriCorps was not a good fit for a youth corps because of their requirement that corpsmembers be paid even if they did not show up to work which worked counter to our mission of developing a strong work ethic. Moreover, AmeriCorps awarded education grants that were rarely used by our corpsmembers as was explained earlier. All of these issues were clearly deficits AmeriCorps presented to our organization and we had to struggle to overcome. Whether the problem was meeting standards, or having chosen to pursue this funding stream in the first place, a key element was surely the lack of strong leadership from a creative, entrepreneurial board with a coherent sense of mission.

In the face of these changes and questions, the MCSC staff did have one meeting with a new board president in March, 2002. It appeared that he would be a strong leader. An executive with a Milwaukee construction company, he explained he had asked for the resignation of inactive board members and had recruited a former corpsmember to be on the board. This was all good to hear, and some staff members felt MCSC would have new direction. He also pledged he personally would be spending time with all staff members to learn more about MCSC. You could feel the sigh of relief and enthusiasm as many staff members felt their voice may finally be heard and long awaited changes were going to be taking place very soon. However, nothing changed except the dismissal and resignation of many staff members and corpsmembers. As far as I know he did not meet again with any staff member before my departure several months later.

In previous years, MCSC could rely heavily on the "ideas and energy" of the founder-director to build 'sweat-equity'. The long-term sustainability of MCSC "requires the institutionalization of energy and ideas beyond one person (Edwards & Fowler, 2002, p. 219)." MCSC can no longer afford to rely on a single leader, no matter how strong, for vision and perspective, since by doing so MCSC accepts his identity as

their own. MCSC needs dedicated action from a board to help redefine and focus the organization's mission.

Autonomy and the Organization's Director: Closely associated with the problems of board leadership are those we can link to the founder-director's role. Mr. Tony Perez, a strong and effective, even charismatic leader had been responsible for MCSC during the decade of its startup. He was a hard working risk taker; and had built up a wide range of stakeholders for the organization. He left MCSC to become director of the Housing Authority of the City of Milwaukee. Given the relative autonomy he had as leader of MCSC [deserved, to be sure, but also a function of the lack of leadership from the board] it might be expected that his departure would create the vacuum alluded to above.

However, the significance and the implications of Mr. Perez's continued presence for MCSC was highlighted by our move to the North Tower Lobby of the Highland Senior Housing Facility. Why did we move from the spacious former St. Hedwig Grade School? To be sure, the rent was very high since our building was located in Milwaukee's hip 'Brady Street District' and our monthly utility bills were very high. Moreover, the City of Milwaukee condemned our operations building located on Fond du Lac Ave.

So, because of our 'special' relationship with HACM we arrived in the small lobby of the North Tower of Highland Senior Housing Facility. We were able to secure this more affordable location due to the fact that Mr. Perez could make it available. Critics and scholars might say we were trading a good deal of autonomy for our new director and the organization, for this gift of space. The board had to have been aware of our reliance on the founder-director and yet expressed no opinion that we heard.

What will happen when Milwaukee has a change of administration and the man who appointed Mr. Perez is replaced [as it seems he will be] by another candidate? Questions about what a dependent relationship means should have been at the forefront of board considerations. This is even more a problem since under the leadership of Mr.

Perez the MCSC has had significant "fee for service" contracts with the Housing Authority to provide income to corpmembers and monies for operating costs.

Surely these questions are key for the current director, Christopher J. Litzau. He has had to replace an extremely strong leader, and now to lead within the bounds of the former director's new home agency. He is certainly in a position likely to limit autonomy, as noted; and without a strong board to provide coherence in mission and boundary maintenance in the face of competing stakeholders, the new director's visions are likely to be impaired. These visions include building 'satellite Art Corps' throughout South-East Wisconsin and pursuing the Denali Initiative which will provide watersheds for the Milwaukee area. To pursue these visions he needs to be fully "installed" as the leader of MCSC.

To be sure, the new director did manage some of the risks of relocating very well. At the new Headquarters he was confronted with the task of sharing the first floor of the Highland Senior Housing Facility Lobby with a group of frail elderly residents. As one could imagine the assimilation of at-risk youth with the elderly lifestyle was met with some challenges. Many residents were appalled at the language our corpsmembers used. Others complained of the untidiness of the North Lobby, which many residents had planned on using for their own recreation before MCSC moved in. Corpsmembers were not allowed into the South Lobby although they had easy access through a corridor which left many residents feeling "unsafe". Also, disabled residents living in the North Tower of Highland Senior Housing Facility had no choice but to use the elevator which was located in MCSC's classroom and common area.

Ultimately differences were greatly diminished between Highland staff and residents and MCSC staff and corpsmembers when MCSC's director charged the staff chaplain with holding bi-monthly "Community Meals" with the Highland Park Senior Housing Facility staff, residents, MCSC corpsmembers and staff members. The monthly luncheons not only provided a lunch for corpsmembers, staff members and residents, it also afforded an opportunity for both groups to establish some form of relationship.

Essentially corpsmember behavior improved due to a sense of accountability toward the residents. Corpsmembers began to appreciate the fact that we were guests of theirs and effectively shared a space with them that the residents considered their home.

This was only one of many instances where our director demonstrated a great amount of leadership. Although, it seemed his ability was hampered by many of the constraints mentioned earlier; the board and founder-director.

Program Development

During 2000-2001 we faced two reoccurring programmatic dilemmas; rolling enrollment and inadequate corpsmember development. Ultimately these dilemmas find their way back to many of the issues already discussed. However, their main importance lies in the way these policies have adversely affected MCSC's productivity and how this ultimately affects the corpsmember.

Recruitment, Enrollment and Organizational Mission: The enrollment process is what gives the trainee a first impression of the MCSC. As explained earlier enrollment had meant filling out an application, passing a drug test, being assigned a crew and getting to work-- what was commonly referred to as 'rolling enrollment'. Even though this enrollment process definitely reflects our motto, 'where what works best is work itself', it left much to be desired by corpsmembers and staff members trying to provide some semblance of structure and routine to what was at times a chaotic existence. As a result corpsmembers often found themselves in awkward positions, such as being placed in GED/HSED prep courses that were one week from taking the exam or on a crew that had been working together for several months. This would often result in corpsmembers not receiving a communal experience, which was one of the goals of MCSC, a goal explicitly put in place to provide the corpsmembers with a safe and solid structured environment. Also, staff would receive a new corpsmember without having available their personal work background or education level which would require spending an excessive amount of unproductive time with a new corpsmember to discover their assets

and demands. This resulted in the other corpmembers missing out on instruction. Overall this process of enrollment was very disruptive of what MCSC sought in the way of a structured work plan. Corpsmembers were coming in at all different times and phases of the program making the achieving of successful outcomes more challenging.

After having visited the YouthBuild McLean County and examining their enrollment and orientation process MCSC learned of many new possible approaches for bringing corpsmembers on successfully—including group enrollment. The latter idea was rejected by the director who said that MCSC could 'never' go to group enrollments. This rigidity resulted in many wasted hours of training and orientation for individuals who could have been easily assessed as not ready for MCSC through a simple two week orientation. This is not to mention the hundreds of hours wasted trying to devise education plans for corpsmembers that were in some cases months behind the rest of the class or even at too low of an educational level to begin teaching. It seemed enrollment had little to do with structure or training and ebbed and flowed with the coming and going of available donor dollars. MCSC's major concern seemed to be to enroll corpsmembers as quickly as possible when donor dollars were easily captured.

MCSC's leadership must not only see 'value added' in terms of dollars captured, General Education Degrees, number of corpsmembers served, hours worked, and streamlined operation, yet they must give equal attention to minimizing corpsmembers risk. Every decision made has an impact on the corpsmembers and it is the duty of the director to see risks we take result in benefits for the corpsmembers. (Dees et al., 2001, p. 130)

Had MCSC put in place a plan to avoid this social risk taking, they would have likely promoted group enrollment. Such enrollment would have allowed them to bring corpsmembers into a developed, structured and stable environment. While observing the YouthBuild McLean County Program their director explained she knew of only two organizations in the country that successfully used rolling enrollment, the Los Angeles Conservation Corps and similar program in New York.

With a group enrollment you create a more stable environment for staff and corpsmembers to share this new experience together, they train together, work together and learn together all from the start. The group approach provides a clear start and end so corpsmembers and staff can work and plan for corpsmember futures as the end of service approaches. At MCSC neither staff nor corpsmembers knew when or where things started or finished, when winter approached and work slowed down corpsmembers were 'laid off' often to be brought back in the spring when work 'picked up'. How does this build responsible work habits or allow for setting and obtaining goals? It cannot.

Corpsmember Development: As a youth development organization it is the duty of MCSC to attempt to reduce the number of social risks corpsmembers are exposed to. On many occasions I would witness MCSC actively exposing corpsmembers to new, sometimes more complicated risks than they had encountered prior to enrolling with MCSC. A mild example was a female corpsmember who had been working at MCSC for many years, exactly how long is not known although it has been more than a few years, even though the program is designed to last one year.

The whole principle of the corps is to move people from unemployment to employment. Generally at-risk youth development organizations require program participants to show progress in order to stay in the program and this progress is usually measured by setting a standard set of goals. So why could MCSC not do this for this particular young woman, considered one of our best corpsmembers? There were no benchmarks by which to measure progress of the participants in MCSC programs. If a corpsmember showed up on time, staff members liked her or him, they worked and didn't cause too much trouble that was usually good enough to stay as long as they liked.

By doing so MCSC staff members were holding this corpsmember back for their own benefit. By not helping her move away from the corps, she had become dependant on MCSC, and impeded in her move toward a position outside of MCSC. She has become too comfortable at the corps and now the transition to 'real work' may have been made more difficult by the prolonged habits and experiences encountered at MCSC.

Once again rolling enrollment is partially to account for this. If MCSC had a clear beginning and end of service and benchmarks of progress corpsmembers would move on from the program. Archaic rules and procedures continue to be a problem, impeding the organization in its important mission of service to youth and the community

Staff Development

Defining Roles: Clearly defined staff roles are critical needs for any organization, and certainly for new and always vulnerable nonprofits. It is linked to leadership, since strong leaders need to "bridge the gap between overall strategy and individual performance (Dees et al., 2001, p. 22)." The leader must instill a clear understanding of the mission and how this mission is carried out by the everyday duties of the individual staff members.

Those joining the MCSC staff sometimes did, and sometimes did not, get a job title. Variation existed as to whether or not you received any introductions to others, got a job description and with it a clear definition of your roles and responsibilities as a staff member. First coming onto the job many staff [as well as corpsmembers] drifts from one task to the other not knowing what to do. Occasionally the director may assign a direct task, but otherwise you are on your own to make work. It may be months before other staff members and corpsmembers know who you are and why you are there.

What does this do? First, it does not create a sense of belonging. When you've been working somewhere for several months and people are still unable to introduce you by name or job title it goes without saying how this undermines morale and identification with the organization. MCSC must lead by example and that example must touch every individual in the organization in a positive way. Additionally, failure to define roles and responsibilities from the outset produces a good deal of confusion. Commonly people wonder: "Whose responsibility is this?"

A specific example of these implications can be seen in a dispute between one of our vocational coordinators and our youth development coordinator over how a corpsmember could be fired. The argument was extended and promoted both by "taking of sides" and division among staff, and invaluable time being wasted. Subsequently our vocational coordinator was released and felt it was due to prior disagreements with our youth development coordinator. In reality it was the fault of our director for retaining archaic policies that did not fit our organizational chart and which led to confusion about dismissal guidelines.

Staff had to wonder if the absence of "real" rules, policies and procedures was a purposeful decision by someone in authority. Maybe they thought the more ambiguous the standards, the better? This would certainly allow leaders to ignore mission statements and perhaps make the organization flexible enough to fit the guidelines of any funding agency.

Another example of not defining roles would be the manner in which new staff members were brought on board. For instance our educational coordinator was initially to be our program manager and grant writer. In nearly a year he wrote not one grant and spent a considerable amount of time working as our administrative assistant. Here you have an employee who has a law degree and a graduate degree in French Literature answering our phone and settling petty squabbles between staff and corpsmembers. The rest of his time was spent going through thousands of pounds of old paperwork that had built up over a ten year period. It was not a surprise to us when he resigned.

By not defining roles and responsibilities our director was able to assign tasks to whomever would take them. By doing this it created overlap that would often result in tension because staff members felt they were doing a job that was not their responsibility. One memorable occurrence just prior to the dismissal of our vocational coordinator perfectly exemplifies this confused ambiguous management style. Winter was drawing near and we had not been able to complete a job for the HACM to sod and landscape a housing development. The director called for "all hands on deck" and our vocational

coordinator volunteered to go out into the field and work with corpsmembers and crew supervisors to help complete MCSC's obligations. At the next management meeting MCSC's director announced the dismissal of our vocational coordinator and cited his willingness to help crews as a sign he was not working hard enough. Our director said something to the effect "If you have time to leave headquarters and work in the field you're not doing your job, which would take up all your free time." At the previous management meeting he endorsed our work projects managers' call for staff member participation in the field. This only added to a staff member's sense of anxiety over possibly losing their job which often led to staff accusing each other of plotting against one another.

Organizational Performance: Directors, instructors, managers and corpsmembers at MCSC for the most part did not see the agency's mission as the "star we steer by (Dees et al., 2001, p. 19)." There were several reasons, many already suggested or detailed here. For one, it was rare that our mission was ever stated as the basis for a discussion or debate "to build cohesion and focus that contributes to… success (Dees et al., 2001, p. 20)."

Why had the mission not been employed as an organizational tool? It could be argued the mission is archaic, held in place by inertia or as a sign of the continuing influence of the original director. It clearly needs reviewing. This could best be seen in MCSC's inability to effectively change and make decisions needed as we adapted to changing circumstances—and sought new opportunities. At the point which our AmeriCorps status was revoked I expected board members to take control of MCSC. Yet, nothing happened! This was a clear 'red flag' and it was time to reorganize MCSC. Then we became a Youthbuild member and our funding standards changed dramatically and still no direct leadership to ensure that we meet new and different funding standards. Was our mission really only to capture as many funding dollars as possible through cheap labor?

This surely is not entirely caused by the lack of a clear mission, although the mission would provide a platform for the introduction of new programs and directions MCSC may want to take in order to remain relevant in the 21st Century. A new mission would create an opportunity to separate from the past, affirming a desire to move away from appearing to exist merely in order to continue the legacy of MCSC and/or to provide a perpetual home for our founder-director. The bottom line is that changes must be embraced that allow MCSC to effectively serve the people of Milwaukee in ways the people deem relevant and it is the people who believe in MCSC's job to help support this effort.

It appears the director is focused on the future yet struggles with an invisible board and an interfering founder-leader. The director might present the changing needs of corpsmembers, and how MCSC through new initiatives can address growing community issues and conditions, which would reassert MCSC's relevance as a youth, community and workforce development program. By not forcing the mission to be revisited MCSC further undermines its autonomy.

MEETING CHALLENGES

Three Approaches toward Mission Fulfillment

MCSC performance can be improved by taking steps in three areas. They are in giving voice to corpsmembers, working to empower and improve their community involvement and building MCSC's role as a beneficiary community leader.

First, in order to increase the significance of our corpsmembers voice and those individuals impacted by corps activities, the organization must pursue a non-linear approach toward donor evaluation. Donors must be encouraged to give up a focus that places value on bureaucratic processes—on how well programs are standardized, and how many units of activity we can count. The optimization of operational performance in the "context of large-scale service delivery" has led our focus toward producing

tangible outcomes and comporting ourselves in the manner of a chameleon in order to garner funds. (Dees et al., 2001, p. 275) Donors must provide organizations like MCSC the "flexibility to respond in different ways across a diverse set of activities, with an underlying emphasis on grassroots-level empowerment (Dees et al., 2001, p. 275)." As mentioned before, by continually relying on HACM, especially as a contractor "brings pressure to achieve short-term quantitative targets and this may destabilize other aspects" of MCSC as was seen with an increased focus on completing field-work and reduced emphasis on corpsmember education, job placement and staff member development. (Dees et al., 2001, p. 286) This problem could be averted by building diverse linkages between corpsmember communities, policy makers and area businesses.

Such linkages would be built through a presence of MCSC in corpsmember communities. More programs such as the "Community Meal" must be instituted by the MCSC in order to build a strong and shared organizational culture that employs a multifaceted approach to the contexts within which Milwaukee's inner city youth grow up and often develop values alien to the wider society. The evaluation cannot be made merely by looking to MCSC staff members, corpsmembers and board members.

MCSC should turn as well to the organizations and institutions in the community that have a stake in responding to poverty and social conflict. It could mean turning to community based citizen groups as potential partners, viewing its role to some degree as a partner of those agencies seeking citizen empowerment and community development. How might they become partners—promoting autonomy and power, and forcing deliberation on mission and goals? They may well be able to build on work such as that of Saul Alinksy in Chicago in "building on local 'pockets of power' such as unions, religious groups, ethnic and civic groups, small business associations, and political organizations." (Sandel, 1996, pp. 336-337) To be sure, many of these potential partner associations have been in decline, as Robert D. Putnam argues in his well known work, Bowling Alone [2000]. Thus, were MCSC to secure the autonomy, increase its accountability to the community, it may need to become more proactive as a partner—in generating civic capital. It might take as its model for "taking up the flag" to reorganize

community groups work such as that undertaken by the Industrial Area Foundation (IAF)—which is the descendent of the Alinsky program.

One of the IAF programs that might become a model through which MCSC could both contribute to community organizing and empowerment, and better serve its key constituency of youth, is something called Communities Organized for Public Service (COPS). Established in 1974 through work in poor Hispanic neighborhoods in San Antonio, COPS support came from pre-existing institutions like the Catholic Church which provided not only "a stable source of funds, participants, and leaders but also a shared moral language as a starting point for political discourse (Sandel, 1996, p. 337)." COPS would not identify and train traditional political figures or activists as leaders but would select and train "those accustomed to working in community-sustaining institutions like school PTAs and church councils (Sandel, 1996, p.337)." These COPS would serve to create horizontal and vertical linkage as mentioned above between inner city Milwaukee communities (horizontally) affected by the work MCSC does with Milwaukee's youth possibly made up largely of "women 'whose lives by and large have been wrapped up in their parishes and their children" as in the case in San Antonio. (Sandel, 1996, p.337)

Organizing something like COPS would tend to give community stakeholders a linkage to policy makers, resources, small businesses, donors, and the like. This would afford MCSC means to justify its efforts and those of other grassroots organizations in a manner that is non-linear, while giving voice to grassroots organizations in an advocacy role.

One must recognize that an organization alone cannot legitimize new indicators. That must be done through a rich group of stakeholders who are able to see the diverse nature of development and how all actors are reliant on one another to effectively implement change. Through an approach such as COPS communities are empowered. Thus MCSC's effort to justify a more diverse set of indicators of success would be validated by COPS that can act independently and are aware of all the factors that place

children at risk. They could convey new meaning—and affirm that children's needs and options cannot be measured merely by GED attainment and employment, or whatever the going set of linear indicators that may be currently applied to an organization by funding agencies.

Funding agencies, donors and governments have traditionally regarded 'at-risk' youth development simply as education and employment. It is often believed that the 'blueprint approach' toward project management which "assumes that it is possible to predetermine a set of cause-and-effect relationships that will turn resources, knowledge or technology into desired and sustainable human change (Edwards & Fowler, 2002, p. 295)". In the case of MCSC programs like YouthBuild and AmeriCorps provide a 'blueprint approach' that is expected to result in 'at-risk' youth who have provided a monetary benefit to society, fewer incarcerations, greater employment skills and a higher ability to obtain a diploma or technical certificate. (Jastrzab, 1997, pp. 16-17) MCSC should consider ways to promote changes in program development approaches of funding agencies and donors who support the linear visions behind programs like YouthBuild or AmeriCorps—where resources are inappropriately used in a predetermined sequence of activities to produce the desired outcome. (Edwards & Fowler, 2002, p. 295) Currently, implementing programs such as YouthBuild and AmeriCorps "requires action by a number of organizations which are tied together like a chain" and thus lack "a strong and equitable conical, bi-directional, horizontal and vertical relational flow between all parties in the development of these social programs (Edwards & Fowler, 2002, p. 295)." Programs like those of MCSC will continue to fail to reach full potential until they can be encased in a more holistic effort, building on public and private partnerships, and seeking to deal with systems rather than individual "units". (Edwards & Fowler, 2002, p. 295)

In an assessment of youth corps done in 1997 by Abt Associates Inc., "Youth Corps: Promising Strategies for Young People and Their Communities", they argue that:

> "An important question for policymakers is whether the benefits generated by the programs are worth the costs of operating the programs. That is, are the programs

worthwhile from the standpoint of society as a whole? To address this question, the monetary benefits and costs were analyzed and linked to the major groups in society that they affect." (Jastrzab, 1997, p. 21)

By definition Youth Corps "provide services to a segment of the population who are unable to meet the full cost of what they receive; if they could afford them they could go to the market as consumers… Financial returns therefore, cannot serve as a measure of organizational performance (Edwards & Fowler, 2002, p. 297)." Along the same line, Rosabeth Moss Kanter [1979] has reviewed the wide range of conceptual dilemmas, practical difficulties, contending principles and different methods adopted in attempts to determine non-profit effectiveness, productivity and performance. She concluded that:

1 "the measurement of effectiveness must be related to a particular context and life stage of the organization;
2 rather than seeking universal measures, the need is to identify appropriate questions reflecting multiple criteria; and
3 the concept of assessment of organizational goals should be replaced with the notion of organizational uses – in other words, to recognize the fact that 'different constituencies use organizations for different purposes (p. 298)."

In light of these arguments, we can reflect on the MCSC's loss of $100,000 in HACM funding because corpsmembers were not fulfilling work requirements agreed upon in a contract between HACM and MCSC. This recapturing or evaluation of MCSC in a sense did not take into account our organizations context, 'at-risk' youth development, nor our organizations life stage, consolidation. How could MCSC's founder-director allow HACM to withdraw funding based on slow job completion? He had a greater understanding than most anyone of MCSC's mission to develop 'at-risk' youth who had few if any job skills and a generally low education level. Yet MCSC performance had been measured solely by HACM to be undeserving of these funds largely based on the fact that we were not meeting work requirements.

MCSC was again being measured by job performance, although what criteria should have been measured when working with 'at-risk' youth from inner-city Milwaukee? HACM as a Youth Apprenticeship Program (YAP) Sponsor of MCSC should have been sensitized to the "educational and/or economic disadvantages" of our corpsmembers through their many collaborative efforts together and that this would have afforded some more appropriate evaluation measurements than merely meeting work goals. (Locke, 1996, p. 10) Also, this pressure to perform on the job resulted in reduced importance being placed on education and life skills development at MCSC.

Why Isn't There Any Money For Youth Corps?

MCSC remains dependent on funding sources that, as I have tried to show, tend to reduce flexibility and autonomy—and undermine the agencies ability to serve its clientele as fully as it might. Why does it need to remain linked to such sources of assistance? Youth corps is perhaps now seen as somewhat passé. Funding agencies seem more attracted to the possibilities of starting new initiatives like AmeriCorps and YouthBuild without taking into account how these new programs overlap services that organizations like MCSC have been providing for over a decade.

Funding agencies fail to consider how new programs would benefit by adapting to fit, in some if not all cases, the youth corps models. Youth corps' are already up and running, with a relatively long track record and work to build on this could provide improved success through the services that organizations like MCSC provide. Instead they expect MCSC to conform to their funding standards without debate, knowing that this is not possible. As noted earlier, this allows the funding agency the ability to assert an ambiguous rule over MCSC and similar organizations, holding them to funding standards at their convenience instead of trying to meet the requests of beneficiaries.

A somewhat tangential example frequently encountered in society and at MCSC may shed further light on these arguments. A corpsmember who will be referred to as

Ben was released from prison into a halfway house and placed into our work-to-school program. Ben needed to remain in our program in order to stay out of jail. He seemed to be the type of person everyone picked on, although he appeared to do nothing to deserve this mistreatment. While at the halfway house Ben was physically abused and he left. His flight ultimately resulted in his re-incarceration. Ben's inability to sustain the continual attacks upon his person resulted in him being returned into the prison system.

How does Ben's story relate to program design failures of AmeriCorps and YouthBuild? Had these programs afforded a more flexible program structure that was not so strictly focused on GED/HSED education and fieldwork hours, MCSC would have been able to develop stronger linkages with Ben and the halfway house he was staying with. Was the halfway house even aware that Ben was working at MCSC? Who was Ben's Parole Officer? MCSC could not effectively help Ben because of the high priority placed on more rigid program evaluation indicators such as getting sod down. The importance placed on these indicators often results in staff members losing sight of the mission which is directly related to program design, which is being developed and sustained by bureaucracies such as AmeriCorps and YouthBuild which are developed without the appropriate stakeholders involved or in mind.

The Grassroots Development Framework

A possible means to correcting the narrowness of program assessment and limitations in developing more holistic social programs may be through a device developed by the Inter-American Foundation (IAF) called the Grassroots Development Framework (GDF). The GDF is designed to measure the results and impact of IAF programs. The IAF believes results are of great importance; they inform decisions, signal challenges, confirm achievements and indicate topics for further research. The GDF has been developed by adapting what has been learned from over 4,000 programs funded by the IAF.

The GDF would be useful to both MCSC and their funding agencies, by increasing capacity for creating dynamic program objectives and setting more realistic standards for reporting achievements, assets and demands. The GDF provides a device to gauge the effect and the outcomes of a program like MCSC. Because the GDF has been implemented throughout the world, many funding agencies have adapted the GDF to fit their specific programmatic needs.

Possible Outcomes of GDF: By adapting an evaluation process such as the GDF you could offer a strong challenge to "business as usual" in judging development outcomes. Organizations would be able to raise doubts about outcomes gauged by the:

> bottom line society who's 'results' tend to be equated with an immediate, tangible product – something that can be captured with a dollar sign or a snapshot. …[A]s veteran field-workers know, today's successful products often turns into tomorrow's white elephant (in the form of empty community centres and abandoned public housing) if it is not the fruit of a broader, participatory process." (Edwards & Fowler, 2002, p. 309)

An organization such as MCSC would greatly benefit by a process such as GDF. This is true because so many of the positive outcomes MCSC generates would be given weight by expanding the analysis of impacts corpsmembers received through MCSC and how these impacts affect the community and society in general. Also, by implementing an evaluation such as GDF it would expose organizational deficits, such as lack of clear long term goals, adaptability and access to information and participatory decision-making. [See appendix one for details on implementing such an evaluation methodology]

GDF adapted on a wider scale will afford more productive relationships between overlapping NPO's. For example, MCSC once attempted to access the MLK Center's Learning Lab which had PLATO a software package that would allow corpsmembers to learn at an individualized pace. Because of our "rolling enrollment" corpsmembers of all educational backgrounds were placed together in the same class, while with PLATO

individuals would be allowed to learn at their own pace allowing the instructor to give corpsmembers attention as it was necessary. MCSC met with the Private Industry Council and the King Center and essentially they were unwilling to share their resources, they failed to appreciate the nature of our corpsmembers, claiming they would be too much of a strain on their staff and office resources. Through GDF a dense network of relationship would develop social capital allowing "citizens to resolve collective problems more easily… greasing the wheels that allow communities to advance smoothly… [and] improve our lot… by widening our awareness of the many ways in which our fates are linked (Putnam, 2000, p. 288)." Even if the King Center staff were uncomfortable with corpsmembers using their resources they would have been made available quite easily had these dense social networks been in place. Organizations would be able to freely collaborate in the Milwaukee area without feeling like they would miss out on a funding opportunity or two.

CONCLUSION

At the end of the day MCSC was doing excellent work. No one can deny the fact that the work being done at MCSC is valid and worthy of much praise. Without the corps many 'at-risk' youth of Milwaukee would go without an opportunity to pursue a job, education or meaningful social intercourse. MCSC is truly building social capital.

As described by the many accomplishments, MCSC is quite capable of garnering support and attaining successes in a variety of organizational areas. I strongly believe that with the correct leadership changes in time the organization will reach a new plateau that will be much greater than anyone had imagined.

Yet, as was mentioned over and over, without leadership and autonomy neither MCSC nor any institution will be able to realize their potential. I imagine the next few years at the corps will be both the most challenging and rewarding if effort toward change is pursued.

Personally I had a most positive learning experience; and though I don't believe this type of organization is right for me I still wouldn't trade this opportunity for anything. The corpsmembers and staff members were all great and for that I am grateful for the chance to be able to say I enjoyed my one-year in the corps.

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APPENDIX ONE

The Grassroots Development Framework of the Inter America Foundation

The premise of the GDF is that grassroots development produces results at three levels, and important tangible and intangible results should be taken into account. In business, profits are the bottom line. In grassroots development, a project must generate material improvements in the quality of life of the poor. Because poverty entails not only lack of income but also lack of access to a range of basic services (including education, healthcare, shelter and others), as well as insufficient opportunity for active civic participation, the GDF draws these indicators into a single tool.

A development project is a special kind of investment that should produce tangible and intangible benefits, and the GDF seeks to measure and document both. The Foundation's experience has demonstrated that each project can plant a seed for change and that grassroots development produces results not only for individuals but also for organizations and society. Therefore, the cone shape of the GDF portrays the potential dimensions of the impact of grassroots development, progressing from individuals and families, to organizations, to the community or society at large - the three levels of the GDF. (Ritchey-Vance, 1996, p. 4)

GDF Indicators

Category: Standard of Living

- Subcategory: Basic Needs

  1.1 - Satisfaction of basic needs: Number of beneficiaries of the project who have improved or are improving their standard of living as a result of grant activities

  1.2 - Living Conditions: Number of beneficiaries of project whose socioeconomic conditions changed owing to project activities themselves and not the economic or political situation in the country.

- Subcategory: Jobs and Income

  2.1 - Jobs: Number of beneficiaries who through the grant, obtained new jobs, improved those they have, or kept those that otherwise would have been eliminated. "Improved jobs" means better pay and/or working conditions. "Kept or preserved jobs," means that if the grant had not been made, the affected persons would have become unemployed.

  2.2 -Average Income: Average income received by beneficiaries in the last 6 months from project activities.

- Sub-Category: Assets

  3.1 - Total Liquid and/or Fixed Assets: Refers to total annual liquid and/or fixed assets that beneficiaries accumulated as a result of the grant activities. Liquid assets may include, but are not limited to, construction materials, equipment, inventory, livestock, crops, forests, and other goods that could be converted to cash rather quickly. Fixed assets may include houses, buildings, land, and installations that are of a permanent nature.

  3.2 - Level of Liquid and/or Fixed Assets: Refers to the number of beneficiary families according to the level of fixed and liquid assets they have as a result of grant activities.

Category: Personal Capability (Knowledge, Skills & Attitudes)

- Subcategory: Knowledge & Skills

  4.1 - Acquisition of knowledge and/or skills: Number of beneficiaries (men and/or women) who acquired knowledge and/or skills through courses, seminars, or job training sponsored by the project. Also include technical assistance received by beneficiaries.

  4.2 - Application of knowledge and/or skills: Number of beneficiaries (men and/or women) who applied the new knowledge and/or skills to their work as a result of project activities.

  4.3 - Leadership: Number of project beneficiaries who increased their ability to lead or guide others in accomplishing grants activities and goals.

  4.4 - Communication: Number of beneficiaries of the project who improved their

capacity to communicate their ideas and views clearly through project activities.

4.5 - Problem-solving capacity: Number of beneficiaries with capacity to analyze a situation or set of difficult circumstances and prepare to carry out a plan of action.

- Subcategory: Attitudes & Values

  5.1 - Self-esteem: Number of beneficiaries who report having the capacity, obtained through project activities, to act in their own benefit and to improve their standard of living.

  5.2 - Cultural identity: Number of beneficiaries in terms of their appreciation of, care for, and preservation of their cultural values and traditions, and ethnic heritage as a result of grant activities.

  5.3 - Respect: Number of beneficiaries according to their respect for and appreciation of other people's traditions, cultural customs, and races as a result of grant activities.

  5.4 - Determination/Perseverance: Number of project beneficiaries with the capacity, obtained through project activities, to continue to devote time and energy to an activity, project, or goal until it is accomplished, or at least until it is determined that it is not feasible.

  5.5 - Innovation/Adaptability: Number of beneficiaries who utilize and/or adapt more effective and/or efficient strategies, methods, or approaches to achieve grant objectives.

Category: Organizational Capacity

- Subcategory: Management

  6.1 - Planning and Evaluation: Demonstrated capacity of organization receiving grant for planning, monitoring, and evaluation of grant activities.

  6.2 - Use of New Approaches: Refers to the organization's demonstrated capacity to identify and use more effective strategies, methods and/or approaches to achieve grant objectives.

- Subcategory: Implementation/Administration

  7.1 - Credit: Number and average amount of loans given by the grantee to its

beneficiaries.

7.2 - Resource Allocation: Refers to the grantee organization demonstrated capacity to efficiently manage financial, human or material resources, allocating the resources to priority needs and supervising their use to achieve institutional goals and/or grant objectives, as a result of grant activities.

7.3 - Profits: This indicator applies to income generating organizations and refers to the value of the organization's profits earned as a result of grant activities.

- Subcategory: Resources

  8.1 - Resource Mobilization: Total amount of resources mobilized (received) by the grantee from organizations other than the IAF, that were devoted to supporting the IAF-funded project.

  8.2 - Sustainability: The capability of the grantee organization to acquire resources for its own use, from various sources, excluding IAF grant funds.

  8.3 - Resource Brokering: Refers to monetary, material or human resources from national or international public or private entities that the grantee obtained and channeled directly to other grassroots organizations or groups that support the project funded by the Inter-American Foundation. The resources brokered never pass through the grantee's hands but rather go directly to organizations, grassroots groups, or even to beneficiaries themselves.

Category: Organizational Culture (Practice)

- Subcategory: Vision

  9.1 - Long-term Goals: Capacity demonstrated by the organization receiving the grant to establish and modify long-term goals and plans of action, beyond the goals of the current project and enabling the project to be sustained after IAF funding have ended.

  9.2 - Adaptability: The organizations demonstrated capacity to foresee economic, political, or market conditions, and to react appropriately to the situation.

- Subcategory: Participatory Practice

  10.1 - Access to Information: Demonstrated willingness of the grantee to provide information to its staff, beneficiaries, and other organizations involved, if any, on

its policies, programs, and finances.

10.2 - Participatory Decision-Making: Refers to the grantee's demonstrated practice of consulting its staff, partners, and/or beneficiaries on decisions affecting project goals and operations.

- Subcategory: Organizational Relationships

  11.3 - Cooperation: Number and type of organizations that have established informal relations with the grantee. This relationship may include contributions of financial, human or material resources for the project, without the need to recur to written agreements.

  11.4 - Partnerships: The number and type of organizations that have established formal and/or legal partnerships with the grantee organization. Partner organizations agree to work jointly to fulfill the project's goals and objectives. A partner organization is one contributing financial, human, or material resources to support the project's objectives and participating in the decision-making process.

Category: Policy Environment (Laws/Policies)

- Subcategory: Laws

  12.1 - Enactment of Legal Provisions: Number of laws, statutes, regulations, and other legal provisions which the grantee organization helped to enact as a direct result of grant activities.

  12.2 - Implementation of Legal Provisions: The number of laws, statutes, regulations, and other legal provisions that were implemented as a result of the activities of the grantee organization.

- Subcategory: Policies

  13.1 - Public Forums: Number of topics discussed by the grantee organization at meetings or in the media as a result of grant activities. Such discussions promote civil society, including the grantee organization, its beneficiaries, and other organizations cooperating with the grantee.

13.2 - Policy Implementation: Number of policies or plans of action designed and implemented by the grantee organization as a result of project activities.

- Subcategory: Dissemination & Replication

  14.1 - Dissemination: Number of speeches or presentations made, or products developed for purposes of disseminating project approaches, practices, or techniques. Such presentations and/or products are directed at beneficiaries or other interested parties.

  14.2 - Demonstration Effect: Number of individuals and organizations, excluding the grantee organization, which adopted the approaches, methods, or techniques proposed or adopted in the project.

Category: Community Norms (Values & Attitudes)

- Subcategory: Values

  15.1 - Awareness: Demonstrated capacity of organization receiving grant to raise public awareness regarding the disadvantaged population, that is, the population benefited by the project.

- Subcategory: Practices

  16.1 - Favorable Treatment by Society: The demonstrated capacity of the grantee organization, as a result of the grant, to influence the public to accord more favorable treatment to disadvantaged population.

  16.2 - Favorable Treatment by the Public Sector: Demonstrated capacity of the grantee organization, as a result of the grant, to influence the government and/or state institutions to accord more favorable treatment to disadvantaged populations.

- Subcategory: Relations

  17.1 - Civil Society: Influence of the grantee organization in maintaining productive working relations with civil society entities or organizations, other than its relations with partner organizations.

  17.2 - Public Sector: Influence of the grantee organization on public sector

entities or organizations other than its partner government agencies (local, regional, and national).*

* For a better understanding of the GDF go to www.iaf.gov keyword Grassroots Development Framework or see *Grassroots Development*, Supplement to Vol. 17, No 1.