# Who Is Listening to Local Communities?

# Connections between Chicago Region Community-Based Organizations and Regional, State, and National Policy Initiatives

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As the Chicago metropolitan area continues to grow, a number of plans have been authored by a variety of regional civic organizations. "Regional equity" and "smart growth" have been suggested as organizing principles in some, while economic growth and public revenues have been the focus of others. However, the ongoing role of local community voices in past, present, and future plans is a critical matter. The extent to which future direction of our city and suburbs is informed by local needs partially hinges on the integration of local communities in regional policy debates on both comprehensive plans and specific policy initiatives. Often it is at the neighborhood level that new social and economic challenges first become apparent. It is also at this level that innovative solutions are first developed. How well are we integrating this front-line knowledge and creativity into our regional planning processes?

This report focuses on the role that community-level organizations have had, currently have, and could have in setting regional agendas. This project grew out of discussions with community-based organization leaders, foundation representatives, and regional organization staff members. Our examination of community-regional connections contains lessons not only for our metropolitan area, but for most large urban areas in the United States. It speaks to the preservation of democratic planning processes at a time when "regional," "national," and "global" overviews seem to have more credibility in policy-making circles than local needs. The report serves as a reminder that the basic building blocks of regions, nations, and the world are still local communities. It is a needed documentation of how local organizations have maintained a voice in some cases and where better connections to policy making at regional levels and beyond are needed.

Data for the report come from a representative sample of 49 community-based organizations in the City of Chicago, the Illinois counties of Cook, DuPage, Will, and Lake, as well as the Indiana counties of Lake and Porter. We also completed eight case studies of regional initiatives to examine the different ways in which community-based organizations connect with regional and statewide issues. We defined a community-based organization (CBO) as a private, non-profit organization that demonstrates effectiveness in representing interests of a community (or significant segments of a community) or provides services to members of that specific community. In the suburbs, "community-based" organizations were often directly or indirectly linked with local government units, making such organizations different in character than those found in the city. Research was guided by a working group comprised of university-based researchers, community-based organization leaders, and regional group representatives.

Almost all of the surveyed local organizations (46 of 49) had worked on regional, state, or national issues in the past five years. Housing and public affairs, social justice, environment, social service, education, economic development, employment, transportation, and health were among the top interest clusters identified by respondents. The nature of activities included advocacy (30 percent), public information campaigns (21 percent), and organizing initiatives (20 percent). Three out of four CBOs either initiated the contact with regional organizations or represented their initial contact as a "mutual" communication process. Over 80 percent of the respondents indicated that they had weekly or monthly contact with their regional partners.

Factors identified as currently or potentially facilitating great CBO participation in regional efforts include: 1) more flexible funding for CBOs to allow them to explore local-to-regional linkages; 2) more time to meet with similar CBOs in examining common issues that might be regional in scope; and 3)

more resources for regional and statewide organizations to include CBOs in their planning processes. Where partnerships did emerge among CBOs and regional organizations, they tended to be long-lasting. In most cases, CBOs had multiple issues they were addressing at local levels, so there may have been connections with more than one single-issue regional organization. However, given increased fiscal strains of CBOs, without additional funding, these local-to-regional connections have been increasingly tenuous.

Many CBO leaders were emphatic about the need to create a more democratic culture in regional planning. Although they had connections with regional groups, local leaders perceived a dominant top-down decision making culture among regional associations. Frequently neighborhood-level input was solicited and collected, but little local-regional involvement took place after that. Other respondents mentioned that their work was often "co-opted" by regional groups seeking to take full credit for regional policy accomplishments.

Despite short-comings, there were a number of regional organizations held up as examples because they engaged in more democratic policy making processes. Among these organizations were the National Training and Information Center (NTIC), United Power for Action and Justice, and the Metro Alliance of Congregations. Most of our local-regional case studies involved significant CBO involvement in setting the agenda and shaping the policy making process. In one case, CBOs themselves coalesced to create a citywide organization that was entirely governed by local groups.

The real engine behind local-regional connections are the pressing issues themselves. In many cases these were pressing issues that were recognized in local communities before any regional awareness of the problem had developed. An immigrants' rights coalition formed in reaction to the crisis of welfare reform and later anti-immigrant policies following 9/11. A Northwest Indiana coalition emerged to address heavy job losses in an industrial region experiencing erosion of once stable and well-paying industrial jobs. A service-oriented coalition developed to address the city-suburbs, jobs-housing mismatch that was undermining the ability of low-income city residence to access living-wage jobs. And yet another organization developed as a result of the day-to-day community organization awareness that children's health in their local communities was being adversely affected by the lack of family health care insurance. Community leaders worked with a regional organization to improve local community use of already available state health benefits. Case after case of low-income homeowners losing their homes to predatory lenders spurred on a coalition to forcefully address this practice, ultimately leading to state regulatory legislation.

Where there was success in community-regional partnerships as reported by the 49 CBO respondents or described in the eight case studies, a democratic decision-making process and broad community involvement were common features. In practical terms, such inclusive decision-making processes need to be strengthened if we are to shape policies that serve all residents of the Chicago region. In principled terms, strengthening such connections is intertwined with sustaining democratic institutions in this country.

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## INTRODUCTION

In the past few years there has been increased public debate about how smart growth and regional equity perspectives might be effective in ending a cycle of investment and disinvestment which has created divergent worlds of "haves and have-nots" within the Chicago region. A variety of regional organizations in the Chicago metropolitan area have suggested that there is a need for a *regional* smart growth policy--a policy that emphasizes regional equity in areas such as provision of affordable housing, quality education, quality health care, effective public transportation systems, job training, and employment opportunities. In addition, community leaders in neighborhoods excluded from the benefits of Chicago's booming economy increasingly have recognized the regional nature of the inequities and the regional nature of policies needed to ameliorate these imbalances.

In its comprehensive plan, *Preparing Metropolitan Chicago for the 21st Century*, Chicago Metropolis 2020, cautions that regional equity is an issue that all communities and all residents in the metropolitan area need to address. They ask the rhetorical question:

> Why should residents in all parts of the region care about the pursuit of such a dream? After all, those who dwell in vertically gated communities in downtown Chicago or in spacious homes in the region's many beautiful suburbs have so far been able to live good lives, free of the substantial problems that afflict those suburbs and city neighborhoods that are disadvantaged. And they are well-served by a local tax and governance framework and a private transportation system that minimizes their contact with the less pleasant and more risky aspects of high density urban life. (Johnson, 1)

The report produced by a coalition of business persons and regional organization leaders, goes on to state that the economic, social, and cultural well-being of such a region divided into the privileged and the disadvantaged "is not sustainable" (Johnson, 1).

The Campaign for Sensible Growth, a coalition of government, civic, and business leaders in Northeastern Illinois, also points to both the imbalance in development within the region and the mismatch between job location and housing for working families. They assert that this hinders the region's ability to utilize the full resources of the six-county area in future growth and development. As they note in its 1999 report, *Sensible Growth in Illinois: Tools for Local Communities*, "Sensible growth policies and practices can help address these issues, bringing benefits both to older communities in need of reinvestment and to newly developing areas struggling with the costs of serving a growing population" (Campaign for Sensible Growth, 4).[1]

Poor regional planning has tangible economic and human costs. The Chicagoland Transportation and Air Quality Commission (CTAQC), a citizen-led coalition, produced a report on transportation priorities that pointed to the lack of equitable regional coordination in the areas of affordable housing development, job creation, and transportation. In their report, *Changing Direction: Transportation Choices for 2030*, CTAQC documents the regional inequities that have undermined regional economic growth:

> The "jobs-housing imbalance" has become a regional crisis, with low-income households unable to find affordable housing near newer job centers and often unable to find jobs near existing moderately priced housing. Employers report difficulty finding and

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[1]More information on the Campaign for Sensible Growth can be found at their web site: http://www.growingsensibly.org/.

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retaining workers willing to make arduous commutes. Because the job-housing mismatch requires a coordinated approach to both land use and transportation policy, this region is unable to apply remediation strategies. (CTAQC 2002, 15)

National policy analysts have pointed out that urban sprawl and the lack of an equitable planning process are part of a long-term process of disinvestment in inner city neighborhoods, economic decline of older suburbs, and increased inequality within many American metropolitan areas. This has increased racial and ethnic inequality in our nation's metropolitan regions. john a. powell (sic), Director of the University of Minnesota Institute on Race and Poverty, suggests that

> Sprawl isolates inner-city communities from economic and educational opportunities. Concentrated poverty, defined as a poverty rate at or above 40% within a given area, is closely aligned with several sprawl-related trends in urban America. These trends include a decrease in population density in central cities as primarily white, middle class people flee, and the movement of employment opportunities to the outer reaches of the region. (powell, 1)

In his book, *Metropolitics: A Regional Agenda for Community and Stability*, Myron Orfield, warns that once the polarization between have and have-not communities takes place within a region,

> … concentration of poverty, disinvestments, middle-class flight, and urban sprawl grow more and more severe. The increase of real property wealth in certain outer suburbs, aided by the truly massive regional infrastructure expenditures, and its decline in the central city and inner suburbs represent an interregional transfer of tax base from some of the most poor and troubled communities in American society to some of the most thriving and affluent. (Orfield, 1)

## INCREASING LOCAL COMMUNITY VOICE IN REGIONAL, STATEWIDE, AND NATIONAL POLICY

All of these warnings about the destructive aspect of government and private policies and practices raise the question of how these regional inequities can be addressed. Much of the work of policy researchers, think tanks, civic associations, and government agencies themselves has focused on creating more rational regional government structures. However, the purpose of the current report is not so much to look at government structures, but to look at how the voices of local communities, including local low-income minority communities, are heard or can be better heard at regional levels.

The process through which local voices and neighborhood-based solutions are, or can be, included in the development of regional policy is not clearly understood. In some cases, governmental entities do a very poor job of including community organizations in planning and development deliberations. In other cases, given the limited resources of community-based organizations (in terms of time, staffing, and communication budgets), innovative solutions may not always get documented and communicated to policy-makers beyond the immediate local level. For example, the voices of low-income African-American or Latino neighborhoods may not be heard as clearly at the regional level as are the voices of middle-income, white, Anglo, suburban communities. Similarly, the voices of members of non-geographical communities such as single-parent households, low-income female job seekers, or low-income children may not be heard at all as regional policies are being shaped.

Our project examines the current and potential role of community-based organizations in regional policy development.  A guiding assumption of this project is that neighborhood residents and community-based organizations have substantial knowledge of day-to-day community needs.  It is at the neighborhood level that demographic and economic changes are noticed first.   For example, while many journalists and media commentators expressed surprise about the 38 percent increase in the Latino population in Chicago from 1990 to 2000, community leaders in these neighborhoods were very much aware of these changes as they were happening.  They saw neighborhoods changing on a daily basis over that ten-year period.  Similarly low-income residents and community-based organizations advocating for affordable housing are often the first to become aware of the early workings of the gentrification displacement process; rents increase and nearby buildings are converted from apartments to condominium units.

Local community organizations are also intimately familiar with what has worked and what has not worked in addressing community needs.  It is often at the neighborhood level that innovative ideas to address pressing problems emerge.  However, these innovations are not always easily communicated to policy makers at the regional, state, or federal levels. Even citywide and regional organizations advocating for greater regional equity recognize that many local communities have consistently been excluded from regional policy discussions--whether intentionally or unintentionally.

For effective change to occur, what is needed is a two-way communication process between community-based organizations and the larger citywide, regional, and statewide organizations.  This communication can increase an understanding by community-based organizations that "their" issue is common to many other communities in the region--it is a regional issue.   At the same time, regional organizations can gain a detailed understanding of challenges facing local communities, local community priorities regarding what problems are the most pressing, as well as past and present local efforts to ameliorate these problems.  This report places particular attention on communities often excluded from the regional policy-making process, e.g. low-income, African American, Latino, and recent immigrant communities.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Using its well-established process of university-community collaborative research, the Loyola University Chicago Center for Urban Research and Learning (CURL) created the "Regional Equity Working Group" to serve as an advisory committee for the project.[2]  The REI Working Group consisted of researchers, community leaders, and regional advocacy organization staff.   All Working Group members were involved in shaping the research methodology.  They also provided advice in data analysis and in writing the final report. Questions for both a community-based organization survey and eight case studies were developed in collaboration with the advisory committee and community fellows involved in the research projects.

SURVEY AND CASE STUDIES

We used a two-part process in gathering data.  First, we completed a survey of 49 community-based organizations on the Chicago metropolitan area (City of Chicago, the Illinois counties of Cook, DuPage,

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[2] More information on the collaborative research process can be found at CURL's web site: www.luc.edu/curl and in Philip Nyden, Darryl Burrows, Anne Figert, and Mark Shibley, eds., *Building Community: Social Science in Action,*  Thousands Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press (Sage), 1997.

Will, and Lake, as well as the Indiana counties of Lake and Portage) to gather information on the extent to which neighborhood-level organizations were connected with regional policy efforts, and the nature of that involvement.  We defined a community-based organization as a private nonprofit organization that demonstrates effectiveness in representing interests of a community (or significant segments of a community) or provides services to members of that specific community.[3] In the suburbs where "community-based" organizations were often directly or indirectly linked with local government units, we included partially publicly-funded entities, e.g. a housing counseling center, a women's shelter, or an environmental oversight agency, in our community-based organization lists.   We also limited our potential organization population to those that provided services, advocacy, organizing, and/or community education programs in one of the eight substantive areas: housing, childcare, education, employment, environment, health care, economic development, and transportation.  Although other services are offered by community organizations, it was determined that these were the most relevant in respect to the issues of regional equity and smart growth.

There is no formal list of community-based organizations operating in the Chicago metropolitan area.  In order to build an adequate and representative database from which to draw a sample, REI Working Group members were asked to provide lists that their organizations used when communicating with community-based organizations.[4]  Internet searches were conducted to augment this information, particularly for organizations functioning in suburban counties outside of Cook County.

Once the survey was collected and reviewed by the REI Working Group, we selected eight case studies of regional initiatives to examine the different ways in which community-based organizations connect to regional issues.  Our intention was to discover strengths and limitations of these partnerships, barriers and essential resources to collaboration, and how successful community-regional partnerships could be replicated.

Findings from the survey provided a comprehensive understanding of community-based organization roles in regional and statewide policy issues.   We also used survey responses to determine which service or policy areas, and which specific organizations, should be objects of the more detailed case studies of neighborhood-regional connections.

The eight case studies were selected from cooperative relationships either most frequently mentioned by respondents in our telephone survey or identified by our Working Group.  The case studies represent a variety of issues, types of initiative, geographic focus, and origins (See Table 4 in Appendix B).  The case studies focus on: what triggered the collaborative effort; how the collaborative organization or campaign was structured; what the strengths and weaknesses of the initiative were; what resources aided collaboration; what barriers existed; and what lessons could be learned from this collaboration for future partnerships.

Although the case studies were completed after the general survey, for the purposes of this report it is helpful to first present the eight case studies as models of community-based organization involvement in

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[3] In the City of  Chicago it is common for such community-based organizations to define their "community" as one of the 77 recognized community areas, or a small cluster of these 77 community areas.

[4]A number of lists and web sites proved useful.  We used the *Chicago Area Directory of Organizations* (CADO), a Chicago Public Library listing of Chicago CBOs.  This database can be searched by subject or by name of the organization.  The Chicago Association of Neighborhood Development Organizations (CANDO) also published a limited list of groups (although CANDO is now defunct). Yahoo's community listings also proved to be a valuable tool.

regional, statewide, and/or national efforts.   Once the case studies are presented, we will provide an analysis of the data gathered in both the general survey and the case studies.

# CASE STUDIES

Below are summaries of each of the eight case studies. Table 5 in Appendix B provides a comparison of the key structural elements of the various efforts.

COALITION OF AFRICAN, ASIAN, EUROPEAN, AND LATINO IMMIGRANTS OF ILLINOIS (CAAELII)

CAAELLII represents a coalition of ethnic mutual aid societies and other social service agencies established to serve specific ethnic or immigrant groups. By their nature, these organizations have traditionally functioned independently from each other, only serving their particular ethnic community. Consequently, the various groups sometimes have been seen as insulated from mainstream American society. However, changing federal policies--many seen as threatening to all immigrant groups--have created a political environment where coalitions among immigrant-serving organizations are needed if their advocacy efforts are to be effective. Specifically, the passage of federal welfare reform legislation in 1996 increased restrictions on government benefits and social services to immigrants. In the post 9/11 era, increased anti-immigrant sentiments and more restrictive INS policies have further underscored the importance of maintaining a coalition among the many organizations serving area immigrants.

CAAELII is a collaborative of 20 community-based organizations operating in 13 neighborhoods (primarily in Chicago) and representing different immigrant and refugee groups. CAAELII's mission is to improve the quality of life for immigrants and refugees and to promote the voice of that community in public policy. Its primary activities are citizenship activities, advocacy efforts, community organizing, and a technology campaign both for the partner organizations and the communities they serve.[5]

CAAELII was formed in 1998, but its origins predate that by two years. At that time, immigrant organizations started working together because they were caught off guard by drastic changes in welfare reform and the implications for immigrants under that legislation. These groups partnered to lobby the state of Illinois to preserve programs that were being altered by welfare reform and immigration laws passed in 1996. After this campaign, CAAELII evolved into a formal organization.

Originally comprised of 13 organizations, primarily Southeast Asian and Latino groups, CAAELII first focused on citizenship services. Additional community organizations, including Arab, Korean, South Asian and Bosnian service agencies, have joined CAAELII since its formation. CAAELII has no membership fee for partners, but has established clear guidelines for participation in the coalition. All partner organizations are expected to send their executive directors to CAAELII directors' meetings, send staff to the staff meetings, participate in 75 percent of all actions and rallies, identify and recruit community residents for leadership development, and participate on at least one committee. All established CAAELII collaborative activities are coordinated by the staff of the various partners. If a group of members wants to establish a new CAAELII initiative, there is discussion of both the need for action in this area and the availability of coalition organization staff time to contribute to the activity. If a new activity is accepted as a need for the various communities, all partner agencies are expected to contribute to that effort.

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[5]More information on CAAELII is available on their web site: http://www.caaelii.org/.

Funding for CAAELII comes from various sources. Some comes from government sources for citizenship services, while other funding comes from private foundations, corporate and community support. The partners apply for grants together, determining in advance the needs for each agency, and then merging them into one request.

One of CAAELLII's more visible activities is the work done by the Independent Monitoring Board (IMB). This is an independent council which oversees services and practices of local INS offices. The IMB takes grievances to the INS and tracks the progress of these grievances. It also develops policy and administrative recommendations that are submitted to the INS Commissioner and Congress, and communicates policy recommendation to the media and general public. Finally, the IMB monitors INS compliance to new directives that are adopted. The IMB is coordinated by representatives of immigrant issues, including CAAELII partner agencies and other immigrant organizations, past and current INS customers, legal advocates, and other immigration advocates.

## CALUMET PROJECT FOR INDUSTRIAL JOBS

For almost 75 years, Northwest Indiana had been a thriving crescent of cities along southern Lake Michigan. From World War II through the late 1970s, almost 50 percent of the region's workforce was unionized--fueling a vibrant local economy in communities within commuting distance of the steel mills, oil refineries, foundries, and manufacturing plants. The decline of well-paying industrial jobs which started in the late 1970s served to severely erode this local economy. This was an issue that had origins beyond any particular neighborhood, any particular plant, and even any particular city in the region. The scale and pervasiveness of industrial job loss meant that the loss of industrial employment was not just a union issue, but was a city issue, a school issue, a church issue, a housing authority issue, and an issue to many other parts of the community.

In a region with a long history of strong organizations--from unions to churches--it is not surprising that a coalition of organizations emerged to address the declining local economy. There was a perceived need for a coalition to bring together organizations representing different facets of this community. There was a need to build an organizational vehicle to learn more from industrial communities outside of Northwest Indiana—communities that also had been experiencing similar industrial job losses. Community leaders recognized that solutions to the crisis could be developed through better intra-regional and inter-regional communication.

The Calumet Project was established in the mid-1980s as the decline in the steel industry resulted in the closing of multiple plants and the loss of thousands of jobs in the region. Community groups and churches organized to stop plant closings and to preserve well-paying industrial jobs. The Midwest Center for Labor Research[6] and the United Citizens Organization were the two primary organizations responsible for creating the Calumet Project.

The Calumet Project for Industrial Jobs is a membership organization with both individual and organizational members. This includes the cities of Gary, East Chicago, and Hammond as well as several other, smaller municipalities in Lake and Porter Counties, Indiana. Occasionally its activities include serving some of the nearby Illinois industrial communities--particularly on Chicago's Eastside and far Southside.[7]

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[6] The Midwest Center for Labor Research has since changed its name to Center for Labor and Community Research.

[7] Additional information on the Calumet Project is available on their web site: http://www.calproject.org/.

The Calumet Project consists of approximately 1700 organizational and individual members. Organizational members include unions, churches, neighborhood groups, and environmental organizations.  The Calumet Project serves it members by sharing resources to communicate with its constituents through newsletters and mailing lists.  The Board of Directors is drawn from member organizations, as well as from individual members.   The board determines the goals and agenda for the Calumet Project, guided by ideas and proposals from staff, member organizations, and the general community.

The membership fees of the Project provide a portion of its funding–about 25 percent.  They also fundraise through member events, but its primary sources of funding are foundation and state grants as well as individual donations.  The reliance on grant funding forces the Project to be constantly searching for new sources of revenue.   Many of its projects, including the living wage campaign, will entail multiple years of work, but most of its foundation funding is provided on an annual basis.  In some cases, the Calumet Project is preparing and submitting grants every year to the same funder in order to maintain support for on ongoing initiative.

The Calumet Project has been leading a living wage campaign in the Gary area.  Before the decline of unionized, steel industry employment in the late 1970s, Gary had the highest average African-American wage of any city in the country.   This employment and wage picture has deteriorated dramatically in the past 25 years and the focus on living wages is addressing this.   Some attention has been directed at lower-paying, new service sector jobs (such as employees in new gambling casinos) that have replaced well paying union jobs that have been in decline since the late 1970s.   This has involved both promoting living wage legislation in local municipalities and monitoring the effectiveness of municipal living wage ordinances where they do exist.  For example, while the City of Gary has a law stating that any company receiving tax abatement must hire 50 percent of its employees from the area and 50 percent African-American employees, the City of Gary does not monitor the implementation and impact of this law.

REVERSE COMMUTE PROGRAM MODEL – SUBURBAN JOB-LINK CORPORATION

An anti-poverty organization founded in 1970 to find appropriate employment for displaced workers, Suburban Job-Link Corporation does not quite fit into the normal model of community-based organizations connecting with regional issues.   It is an independent organization that is working to overcome the problems that low-skilled, low-income residents are having finding jobs as these jobs move into less accessible areas of the suburbs.   Suburban Job Link is focused on providing actual services; but in the course of providing these services that bridge the city and suburbs, they address regional policy issues.

Suburban Job-Link provides both transportation services to individuals and policy advice to local governments and other non-profit agencies around the jobs-housing mismatch.  This mismatch has been produced by failures in the public transportation system, suburban sprawl, the lack of affordable housing in the suburbs, and the relocation of large numbers of low-skill factory and service jobs to the suburbs.[8] Because the immediate issue is one of building transportation links between city residents and suburban jobs, this is a service and an issue beyond the reach of both neighborhood-focused organizations and many regional agencies.

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[8]More information on Suburban Job-Link Corporation is available at their web site: http://www.suburbanjoblink.com/.

Rather than focus on providing temporary, lower-paying inner-city job opportunities for clients, Suburban Job-Link wanted to focus more on moving day laborers into full-time work in the suburbs where job growth has been occurring for the past 30 years. Approximately two-thirds of all jobs in the Chicago region are in the suburbs.   As much as 90 percent of the available, low-skill jobs are in suburban communities.  Many of these jobs are difficult, if not impossible, to get to via public transportation.  Most low-income workers served by Suburban Job-Link do not have access to automobiles to get to these jobs.  Thus, Suburban Job-Link began to focus on transportation services to connect lower-income residents from the City of Chicago to jobs in suburban communities.

Much of what Suburban Job-Link does is to provide actual transportation services.  However, the worker-jobs mismatch is related to many ongoing policy concerns within the region.  Consequently, staff serves on the advisory committees of several regional and national organizations that work on issues of spatial mismatch and transportation. They frequently offer presentations on the Suburban Job-Link model of transportation services to other service organizations, advocacy organizations, and policy makers. Suburban Job-Link has a representative on the City of Chicago-Cook County Welfare to Work Task Force Transportation Sub-Committee and also has developed strong ties to the Chicago Transit Authority and the Pace Suburban Bus Company.

Job-Link has become a model program for reverse commute strategies and has used its experience and expertise to influence similar programs at a national level.  It worked with Public/Private Ventures in Philadelphia to develop a demonstration program in both cities, testing the viability of reverse commute services.  Based on this research effort, other initiatives have attempted to model spatial mismatch transportation services. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development followed up on this by authorizing reverse commute demonstration projects in five cities.  Suburban Job-Link served as the site operator in Chicago, and worked with Pace Bus, the Cook County President's Office, the City of Chicago, and the Chicago Jobs Council to implement the demonstration project.

TAX INCREMENT FINANCING  REFORM COLLABORATION

Tax Increment Financing Districts, or TIFs, have been used heavily by many municipalities to promote economic development in retail, industrial, and residential areas.  In fact, by 2004 nearly 30 percent of the land in the City of Chicago was inside a TIF district.[9]   In a process authorized by State legislation, TIFs are supposed to be used in "blighted" areas to stimulate economic development.   Once established by local government process, new property tax revenue resulting from *increased* property value is diverted to make improvements inside the TIF and does not have to go to the taxing bodies that normally receive property tax revenues, e.g. local school districts, city government, or park districts. These taxing bodies continue to receive the tax revenue based on property value before the TIF was created.  TIFs have a finite life, but typically they exist for more than 20 years.

There are significant concerns among community organizations about how TIFs are being used. Some organizations argue that they have been used to accelerate the gentrification process that displaces low-income families.   Others, including government units themselves, have pointed to the fact that tax revenues have been diverted from pressing community needs, for example from public school funding needs toward business development.

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[9]Neighborhood Capital Budget Group "Tax Increment Financing" web site: http://www.ncbg.org/tifs/tifs.htm.

Responding to these widespread concerns among communities inside and outside of the City of Chicago, an effort to reform the existing Illinois Tax Increment Financing law was spearheaded by the Statewide Housing Action Coalition (SHAC)--a statewide membership organization of housing-related organizing and advocacy organizations-- and the Leadership Council for Metropolitan Open Communities (LCMOC)--a Chicago-area fair housing organization. They were joined by the Citizens Advocacy Center (based in DuPage County), the South Cooperative Organization for Public Education, and Jonathan Rothstein, an attorney with the law firm of Gessler, Hughes, and Sokol. Through their SHAC memberships, the Neighborhood Capital Budget Group and the Chicago Coalition for the Homeless were also active participants.

The goal of this advocacy initiative was to create policies that would ensure that TIF districts preserved affordable housing and promoted fair housing practices. The regional organizers also wanted to make sure that community residents were involved in the development and modification process of all proposed TIF districts. This would help to insure that TIFs were serving the needs of a broad cross-section of the community and not just particular business development needs.

SHAC had been engaged in an affordable housing initiative in Chicago's South Loop community. This prompted the coalition to look more carefully at the connection between TIF practices and the shortage of affordable housing. Working to develop TIF practices that promoted and protected affordable housing development rather than destroying existing affordable housing, SHAC's efforts in the South Loop did win promises by the city to create affordable housing in the South Loop TIF. However, despite this gain, SHAC's members felt that the state law needed to be changed to more effectively preserve affordable housing in TIF districts.

Drawing from its member organizations, SHAC created a TIF research working group to examine TIF law, case law, and to develop reform proposals. About this time, the Leadership Council for Metropolitan Open Communities was working on a legal challenge against the City of Addison for using Tax Increment Financing to demolish multi-family residences in a predominantly Latino neighborhood. Partnering with local Latino residents, other DuPage County community organizations and the law firm of Gessler, Hughes, and Sokol, the Leadership Council pursued a lawsuit to protect against the use of TIFs to promote racial and ethnic segregation or displacement. Given the blatant and high profile nature of this case, the coalition of individuals and organizations was aiming at setting legal precedents to stop future TIF abuses. Eventually all participants in this effort joined forces with SHAC's TIF reform group.

This led to the creation of an ad hoc TIF reform committee to develop specific reforms and frame clear modifications to the existing state law. Early in the process sympathetic state legislators were involved in the process, insuring that the ad hoc group's recommendations ultimately would be introduced in the state legislature. Four TIF reform bill proposals were crafted and approved by the SHAC board (which includes a number of community-based organizations' representatives) and by the boards of other organizational members of the ad hoc committee. Once legislation was introduced and made progress in the Illinois General Assembly, a six-member negotiating team was formed from the ad hoc committee, drawing from the organizations participating in the collaboration. This negotiating team was responsible for making decisions on the details of the legislation, drawing input from the constituent groups.

In addition to creating proposed reform legislation, the committee, particularly SHAC, worked to educate community organizations and residents about TIF and the issues posed. Grassroots organizers were actively involved in a process that kept local organizations informed as the smaller committee drafted the proposal and then negotiated on the key elements. This was also a two-way process where

local organizations could provide feedback to the negotiating committee.  E-mail and telephone communications were used to keep this broad constituency informed during the process.

Once one of the four bills made it through the committee, the Illinois Tax Increment Association (ITIA), a pro-TIF lobbying organization made up primarily of municipalities currently using TIF districts, reacted quickly.  The ITIA, while not entirely opposed to any reform, was concerned about reforms that might limit the autonomy of the municipality in TIF decisions and that would limit the flexibility of TIF. For over a year, the alliance formed by SHAC and other principal collaborators negotiated with legislators and the ITIA to shape the final wording of TIF reform legislation.

In effect, the two-way communication process within the alliance allowed community-based organizations to have a voice in shaping the reform legislation.  It also gave SHAC and its partners more leverage in negotiations since there were significant constituencies (and voters) behind them.  The compromise legislation included more stringent definitions of blight, gave more power to the joint review board,[10] mandated housing impact studies in some proposed TIFs, created a new housing TIF category that requires greater public input, guaranteed relocation benefits for displaced residents, earmarked TIF resources to be used for affordable housing, and developed a new formula for school funding in TIF districts.

After getting the legislation passed, SHAC continued to work on public information and training of its members to ensure that community organizations and residents benefited from the changes in law.  It created a manual outlining TIF law and the new changes and detailed how community organizations could get involved in the TIF creation and adoption process.  It continues to provide training and information to its member organizations, and continues to work with the committee it formed to share and discuss ongoing developments in TIF law and the specific use of TIF districts.


KIDCARE PROJECT COLLABORATION

The cooperative arrangements between a community-based organization and regional organizing effort are illustrated by this case study.   An initial focus on a tangible project--enrolling more low-income children in a state funded health insurance program--served as a foundation for community-to-region linkages on related broader policy initiatives.  The Logan Square Neighborhood Association (LSNA) entered in collaboration with the Gilead Center of United Power for Action and Justice in 2001 as one of several community partners in Gilead's KidCare enrollment program.  LSNA worked with Gilead to promote public awareness of the availability of health care coverage through the State of Illinois' KidCare program, which provides health coverage for low-income children.  The project also involved enrolling eligible families in KidCare, advocating for improved KidCare service, and expanding KidCare into a more comprehensive Family Care health coverage program.

LSNA was aware that lack of health insurance and inadequate access to quality affordable care was hurting many residents in neighborhoods in this near-northwest side community area.  Even where a funded government program did exist in the form of KidCare, LSNA leaders were aware that eligible families were not enrolling in the program.  Awareness of the program itself and difficulties in completing successful applications for benefits were both blockades to access.

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[10] The board is a committee representing all the bodies receiving property tax dollars from a proposed TIF district, including school districts and special districts.

A strategy to eliminate these road blocks was available through the Gilead Campaign. This was one of the initial projects of United Power for Action and Justice, a coalition of approximately 300 community organizations (many religiously affiliated), when it formed in the mid-1990s.[11]   Working to increase enrollments in the state's KidCare program was one of the primary objectives of this new regional organizing effort. Gilead works collaboratively with grassroots community organizations such as LSNA to take advantage of its connections with the community residents.  Gilead provides funding, training and technical support, while community organizations provide the staff and reputation to work with the community.

LSNA had worked with United Power on housing issues and saw United Power's emphasis on KidCare enrollment as a way of addressing pressing neighborhood health issues facing low-income residents.  Gilead had money to pay subcontractors to do the work.  LSNA joined with Gilead's efforts in December 2000.  Gilead provided the funds to pay the Outreach Team to do KidCare enrollment, work for which LSNA had no other funding.  Gilead staff came out and trained the Outreach Team on how to help local residents fill out KidCare applications.  They were always available to answer questions and troubleshoot problems.  Team members became experts in providing community education and in assisting local parents in completing the required application forms.

LSNA used its reputation in the community to work with residents on KidCare.  Residents trusted LSNA because the organization was visible in the community and had been working to protect the interests of residents in other areas, such as preserving affordable housing.  This trust built up by the local community-based organization was an important component of the successful campaign; residents-- particularly low-income, immigrant women--would not have reacted the same way to government representatives because of past negative experiences.

In addition to funding and training support, Gilead held monthly meetings with the LSNA staff and staff from other organizations working on KidCare enrollment.  Gilead staff convened a steering committee of staff from the various community organizations working with them on KidCare to address the issues they had in common.  These monthly meetings were held to discuss problems and issues that arose, and to collaborate on possible solutions or advocacy strategies.  In addition, Gilead would meet monthly with LSNA staff separately.

As this local enrollment work was taking place, Gilead was itself putting pressure on state administrators who managed KidCare, attempting to negotiate new rules that made enrollment easier.  In addition to supporting grassroots organizing efforts, Gilead monitored state government practices, and when necessary pressured government administrators to be responsive to the needs of the families being organized by grassroots efforts.

After working successfully on KidCare and building trust with staff at Gilead and United Power, the LSNA KidCare Outreach Team was eager to work on the United Power's campaign to win Family Care. Family Care is an extension of state-funded health insurance to families whose children are covered by KidCare.  Team members gathered signatures in favor of Family Care, and organized a number of press conferences and rallies.  Thus LSNA team members were an important part of United Power's Family Care campaign, which gained widespread support from politicians and health care organizations.  The campaign won a partial victory in the fall of 2001, with some 60,000 individuals becoming eligible for Family Care.

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[11]This was a major revived organizing effort by the Industrial Areas Foundation, an organization started by Saul Alinksy, a famous community organizer in Chicago during the 1940s.  IAF has had decades of successes in changing local policies through direct action strategies in many cities from New York City to San Antonio.

AD HOC COALITION AGAINST PREDATORY LENDING

In Chicago, work on the problem of predatory lending began from a number of different sources. The Legal Assistance Foundation of Metropolitan Chicago (LAF) and the Leadership Council for Metropolitan Open Communities (LCMOC) began to see a rising number of foreclosure cases with loans that had predatory features. Grassroots organizations such as the National Training and Information Center (NTIC) and the Southwest Organizing Project (SWOP) began to notice a rising number of foreclosures in their communities and increasing numbers of community members were complaining of being taken advantage of by unscrupulous mortgage brokers. Neighborhood Housing Services (NHS), a housing group that serves to increase housing investment in low-income communities, also noticed a rise in the number of people coming to them for help in refinancing predatory loans. The Woodstock Institute, which monitors mortgage-lending patterns, started seeing an extreme concentration of subprime loans (loans made to borrowers with impaired credit in exchange for the borrower agreeing to pay a higher interest rate and accept certain terms and fees not normally found on prime loans) in minority neighborhoods.

In early 1999, the Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago set up a Predatory Lending Task Force to further research the problem. This task force brought together major Chicago-area housing groups such as LCMOC, NHS, LAF, NTIC, and the Woodstock Institute to discuss the growth of predatory lending in Chicago and to explore possible policy solutions at the local, state, and federal levels. These groups continued to work together in an ad hoc campaign on predatory lending issues in the Chicagoland region.

Getting state-level regulation passed required the unique skills of each of the organizations involved. Neighborhood-based organizing groups such as SWOP and NTIC brought their grassroots organizing skills. SWOP mobilized its member organizations on the Southwest Side and put pressure on Speaker of the House Mike Madigan. The Woodstock Institute and LCMOC had existing working relationships with financial institutions that proved critical in getting the three major local banks to write a letter of support for the regulations. Additionally, the Woodstock Institute, LAF, and NHS provided expert policy advice during the drafting of the regulations and in meetings with policy makers and the media. Both NHS and LAF provided examples of predatory lending victims, which were used effectively in the media campaign and in testifying at public hearings. LAF also provided technical support to groups on legal issues.

Advocacy groups worked with state legislators to develop anti-predatory lending legislation. In early 2000, a bill was developed in the Illinois House for which advocates worked hard to gather support, but the bill never emerged from the House. The General Assembly did, however, pass a resolution authorizing state regulators to issue regulations regarding predatory lending.

By early 2000 the City of Chicago sought the input of community groups like the Woodstock Institute, NHS, SWOP and NTIC and began crafting an ordinance that would require financial institutions doing business with the city to certify that they were not and did not plan to become predatory lenders. This would be one of the first such ordinances in the country. Much debate surrounded which practices would define a predatory lender, the most controversial of which was the practice of selling single premium credit life insurance.[12] Intensive lobbying efforts from major financial institutions convinced the City, at the last minute, to take single-premium credit insurance out of its definition of predatory practices.

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[12] Single premium credit life insurance is intended to cover the mortgage payments if the head of household dies or becomes disabled or unemployed. Critics have argued that when woven into the mortgage loan, this just further increases the cost of the already costly loan.

In the late summer of 2000, the ordinance passed, but without the support of some of the community groups who had worked to draft it. The Woodstock Institute refused to endorse the city ordinance citing the importance of setting a stronger precedent. SWOP felt that any ordinance was better than no ordinance. The organization wanted something to show its constituents for all the work that had been done. In the end SWOP, along with NTIC, endorsed the city ordinance.

At the same time, similar legislative debate was taking place at the state level; state banking regulators, the Illinois Office of Banks and Real Estate (OBRE) and the Department of Financial Institutions (DFI) released an initial draft of proposed state regulation changes. Coalition members felt these draft regulations were quite weak with little regulatory power over lenders. The Woodstock Institute wrote a critique of this initial draft, and with NHS, LAF, SWOP, and LCMOC, began a series of meetings with Governor Ryan, the regulators, and key members of the Joint Committee on Administrative Rules (JCAR), to ensure that the governor's official anti-predatory lending proposal would be a strong one. What eventually emerged in December 2000 were proposed regulations that largely mirrored Chicago's ordinance. They defined a set of "high-cost" loans for which certain practices were restricted, but unlike the city's ordinance, the state rules prohibited single premium credit insurance. The regulations passed JCAR in April 2001. Since that time, advocacy groups have continued to interact with and press the state regulatory agencies on implementing the regulations. The groups have also put pressure on both elected officials and candidates for office to address the shortcomings of the state regulatory agencies.

RESIDENTIAL PROPERTY TAX ASSESSMENT REFORM COLLABORATION

Beginning in 1997, West Town Leadership United (WTLU)[13] led an effort to reform the assessment process in Cook County to protect low-income residents from displacement resulting from increased property investment (and the related tax increases) in some of the city's communities. WTLU's work focused on assessment practices associated with multi-family properties. A parallel effort, led by the Chicago Rehab Network, the Leadership Council for Metropolitan Open Communities, and the Center for Economic Policy Analysis, focused on the impact of current assessment practices in creating financial stress on low-income households that own single-family homes.

WTLU worked with several other community-based organizations, as well as research organizations and activists, as they sat down with the Assessor's Office to discuss how the current property tax system could be modified to reduce tax-driven displacement of low and fixed-income residents. Under the existing tax system, annual property assessments (and therefore tax payments) were based on the potential market value of rental property regardless of its condition or rent levels. This meant that owners of rental property providing lower and more affordable rents to lower-income or fixed-income residents could see their taxes increase dramatically if property reinvestments and improvements elsewhere in their neighborhoods caused overall community property values to increase. When such tax increases take place, this puts pressure on all landlords to increase rent. This typically displaces existing low-income residents and fixed-income residents (most notably senior citizens).

Aware that many small building owners have been providing affordable rents to Chicago residents outside of formally subsidized government programs, WTLU and other organizations in its coalition approached the Assessor to place a cap on taxes paid by landlords providing low-rent housing units. The

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[13] WTLU was a new organization created by the merger of the West Town Leadership Project and West Town United, which was the organization that initiated the campaign prior to the merger.

coalition wanted the Assessor to recognize these "affordable rent" buildings and protect them from skyrocketing assessments.

Started in 1997, the successful campaign lasted three years. The coalition contracted with the Center for Economic Policy Analysis (CEPA) to complete research and develop a case for the property tax relief. CEPA is a community-oriented research organization (independent from a university) with expertise in property tax policies. Other resources were also obtained: the Policy Research Action Group--the university-community collaborative research network--provided WTU with an intern; and Erie Neighborhood House, one of Chicago's prominent settlement houses, provided staff time to supervise some aspects of the effort.

With the research evidence in hand, WTU staff and leaders engaged in a local organizing project to get the support of property owners in West Town, a near northwestside community area in Chicago. They mailed over 2,000 flyers to landlords and went door-to-door to inform local property owners that WTU was having workshops on property taxes. About 400 people came to these workshops; 130 property owners signed on to WTU's appeal efforts. The "affordable rent campaign" asked the Assessor to include rent-levels as a factor in determining assessments. WTU suggested that property owners of smaller buildings (six units or less) receive lower property assessments if they were charging affordable rents. The WTU Board, along with other community leaders, met with Cook County Assessor Houlihan to win support for its proposal.

In 1997, the Assessors Office created a pilot program for West Town to evaluate an affordable rent-based property tax assessment appeal process. The 130 owners organized by WTU participated as the selected property owners in this pilot process. With the success of this first stage, three years later WTLU went back to the Assessor's Office with other groups and asked that the Assessor's Office institutionalize the pilot program. They brought with them other organizations with which they had worked on various housing initiatives—Bickerdike Redevelopment Corporation, Logan Square Neighborhood Association, and the Spanish Coalition for Better Housing. By the end of the meeting, Assessor Houlihan agreed to institutionalize the program countywide.

The structure of the campaign was very informal. WTLU developed the tax relief program concept, guided the research, and coordinated the organizing process. Along with the other resources mentioned, WLTU provided staff support for this initiative, including one full-time housing director. The strategic research, pre-existing relationships with other organizations and individuals, and the receptivity on the part of an elected official to the reasoned and constituent-supported proposal produced the lasting regional policy change.

CHICAGOLAND TRANSPORTATION AND AIR QUALITY COMMISSION (CTAQC)

While having a significant impact on the quality of life in local communities, transportation planning is typically regional in focus. However, a number of organizations recognized that community voices were not being heard in the transportation planning process. These included neighborhood groups in both city and suburbs, as well as public transit user constituencies such as low-income commuters, youth, the elderly, and individuals with disabilities. To insure that these often-unheard voices had a forum, in 1994, the Center for Neighborhood Technology (CNT) organized a coalition, the Chicagoland Transportation and Air Quality Commission (CTAQC). This is an association of over 190 Chicago-area organizations that work together to pressure regional planning bodies on issues related to transportation planning, including urban sprawl, environmental justice, and public health. CTAQC strives to increase

citizen participation in the transportation planning process.  Coalition members represent a diverse array of groups from throughout the six-county region.

One of the motivations in creating CTAQC was the new requirement for public involvement in deliberations related to federal transportation spending.  In 1991, the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) was passed by Congress.   This legislation called for dramatic changes in how and what money was distributed throughout the U.S.  A key provision of ISTEA was the mandatory public involvement process for transportation projects using federal dollars.  CTAQC organizational members wanted to insure that broad constituencies were heard by state and regional agencies often known for their inattention to local community interests and input.

Despite the new legislation, CNT felt that government agencies had not altered their de facto "closed door" policy, which generally left out public involvement in transportation planning and development at key early stages of policy development.  Whether it was before the 1991 legislation or after it, "public involvement" took place only after regional, state, or federal agencies had developed plans and were about to move ahead with policy changes or transportation construction projects.  Historically, the most notable transportation planning process that initially ignored public input was the development of the Crosstown Expressway plan in Chicago in the 1970s.   Despite the effort by some political leaders to push the plan ahead, public opposition was so strong and community organizing against it so effective that the Expressway blue prints never left the drawing table.  The threat of tearing down 30,000 homes helped to mobilize a successful neighborhood-based campaign to stop the proposal.   Since then, however, other transportation projects that shape the future of neighborhoods, albeit in smaller increments, have not always received such neighborhood-level attention.

Following the passage of ISTEA, and in response to the lack of an organized community-oriented campaign for regional transportation issues, CNT worked with seven other organizations to create CTAQC.   To ensure that CTAQC had broad representation and a credible voice, these cooperating organizations were deliberately diverse.  These organizational interests include civil rights, economic development, senior citizen rights, disability rights, labor union support, environmental protection, and public health.  CNT had worked with or was familiar with these organizations prior to the formation of CTAQC.

The first goal identified by the Commission was to create and disseminate a "Citizen Transportation Plan," designed to have citizens state their values, preferences and vision on transportation and air quality for the region.   This Plan would be used to influence the official transportation planning process in the region to be conducted by Chicago Area Transportation Study (CATS).  CTAQC conducted a series of focus groups to identify citizen priorities for transportation and published the *Citizen Transportation Plan for Northeastern Illinois*. Since 1995, the *Citizen Transportation Plan* has guided the activities of CTAQC.

During 2001 and 2002, CTAQC engaged over 500 residents of the region in community-based summits and interest-group mini-summits to determine grassroots priorities.  The summits have been extensively documented and a report summarizing overall regional priorities was released at a Regional Congress in September 2002.  The report, *Change Direction: Transportation Choices for 2030*, is the most current grassroots vision for transportation for the region.[14]  The only requirement for membership in CTAQC is endorsement of this document. CTAQC staff has been active in recruiting more members since the coalition's inception.

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[14]More recent information of CTAQC activities and reports is available at www.cnt.org/2030.

CTAQC communicates with members and the general public through a quarterly newsletter, e-mail alerts, and regular regional meetings that are held in different locations throughout the metropolitan area. Although initial meetings were held in downtown Chicago, in 2003 CTAQC restructured its meeting process and held "mini-summits" outside of the City of Chicago and Cook County in an effort to recruit a geographically diverse support base. CNT provides five staff, three of whom work full-time on CTAQC. CNT also provides funds and administrative support, including office space from its overall operating budget (CNT funding comes primarily from foundation and government grants as well as individual donors).

CTAQC has used media outlets to promote its policy agenda, including press conferences and news releases. Initially this involved using the resources provided by the Community Media Workshop (CMW) to contact local media. CMW is a regional organization that facilitates community-based organization access to the media. More recently, CTAQC efforts have been aided by Sustain, a progressive organization focusing on grassroots advocacy, marketing, and public relations.[15] CTAQC has also received help in its policy work from regional policy organizations, including Metropolis 2020, Business and Professional People for the Public Interest, and the Environmental Law and Policy Center. CTAQC has been successful at influencing the formal planning bodies, such as CATS and the Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission, because of its clear articulation of the public's goals.

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These case studies of successful models of community-regional cooperation serve as a backdrop to the larger REI Working Group survey of community-based organizations that we now present below. There is considerable congruence between the case studies and the survey findings. In some cases, the findings point to the types of obstacles that the organizations in the case studies had to overcome. In other cases, the survey findings point to persistent impediments to local community voice in regional policy making.

## SURVEY FINDINGS

PROFILE OF ORGANIZATIONS RESPONDING

Forty-nine organizations in our sample participated in the interview process. These organizations represented a range of policy/programmatic areas and geographic locations. Most of the community-based organizations surveyed have small staffs; over half have five or fewer full-time employees. However, almost one-quarter have 20 or more staff. These organizations also have relatively small budgets, with over two-thirds reporting annual budgets of under $1 million. The completed sample consists of: 27 organizations from the city of Chicago, with proportional representation (by population numbers) of the North, South, and West sides of the city; and 22 suburban organizations, with a majority from within Cook County (See Charts 2-5 in Appendix B for complete profile of organizations sampled).

NATURE OF REGIONAL INVOLVEMENT

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[15]More information on Community Media Workshop is available at: www.newstips.org. Sustain's website is www.sustainusa.org.

Nearly all of the community-based organizations interviewed (46 of 49) stated they had worked on a project pertaining to regional, state or national issues in the past five years.  Of these, nearly 60 percent stated that they worked with organizations focused at a regional or larger level. Twenty percent stated they partnered with other community organizations.  The remaining 20 percent worked with a coalition of community and regional organizations (See Chart 5).

Housing and public affairs (20 percent) and social justice (17 percent) were the issue areas identified by the largest numbers of respondent organizations (See Chart 2).  Seven other policy interest clusters, including the environment, social service, education, economic development, employment, transportation, and health were identified.

In terms of the nature of regional activities in which community-based organizations were involved, over two-thirds of the projects were advocacy (30 percent), public information campaigns (21 percent), or organizing initiatives (20 percent).  The remainder were either service provision or community development projects (See Chart 8 in Appendix B).

CONTACT WITH REGIONAL PARTNERS AND OTHER CBOS

There is no dominant pattern of who contacted whom in developing regional alliances.   However, it is clear that it is not a matter of a larger regional organization contacting community-based organizations.  Almost three out of four CBOs either initiated the contact or were parties to a "mutual" communication process.  One-third of the respondents stated that their community-based organization initiated the contact with the partnering regional organizations, or other CBOs involved in the regional coalition.  One-quarter stated they were solicited by other organizations to participate in a project, while the plurality (43 percent) stated that the contact was mutual, that is, the contact had grown out of an ongoing relationship or a past relationship with the regional organization in the past (See Chart 7 in Appendix B).

While members of the REI Working Group were among the regional organizations most frequently named by community-based organizations in the sample,[16] respondents provided a diverse array of partners at the regional, state, and national level--naming 125 different regional, state and national organizations with whom they work.  No regional organizations were named by more than four respondents, and only 23 percent were named multiple times--usually in connection with the same issue or initiative, for example housing issues (See Table 3 in Appendix B).

The community organizations surveyed indicated a high level of contact with organizations focused at a regional level.  Over 80 percent stated they have weekly or monthly contact with the regional organizations with which they work.  Contact with statewide or national organizations was more mixed (See chart 1 below); just over 50 percent for statewide organizations and just over 40 percent for national organizations stated they had weekly or monthly contact.   Aside from the CBO contact with regional organizations, the frequency of contact with statewide and national organizations varied by issue area.  For example, community-based organizations involved in social service policy issues were more likely to have more contact with statewide organizations than they were with national organizations.  On the other hand, CBOs with an environmental focus were more likely to have contact with national organizations than they were with statewide organizations.

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[16]Business and Professional People for the Public Interest and the Metropolitan Planning Council were named four times each, while the Leadership Council for Metropolitan Open Community and the Center for Neighborhood Technology were each named by one survey respondent.

***Chart 1: Frequency of Contact between Respondents and Regional, State, National Organizations***



Percentage of Respondents Indicating Level of Contact with organiztions focused at frequncy indicated.
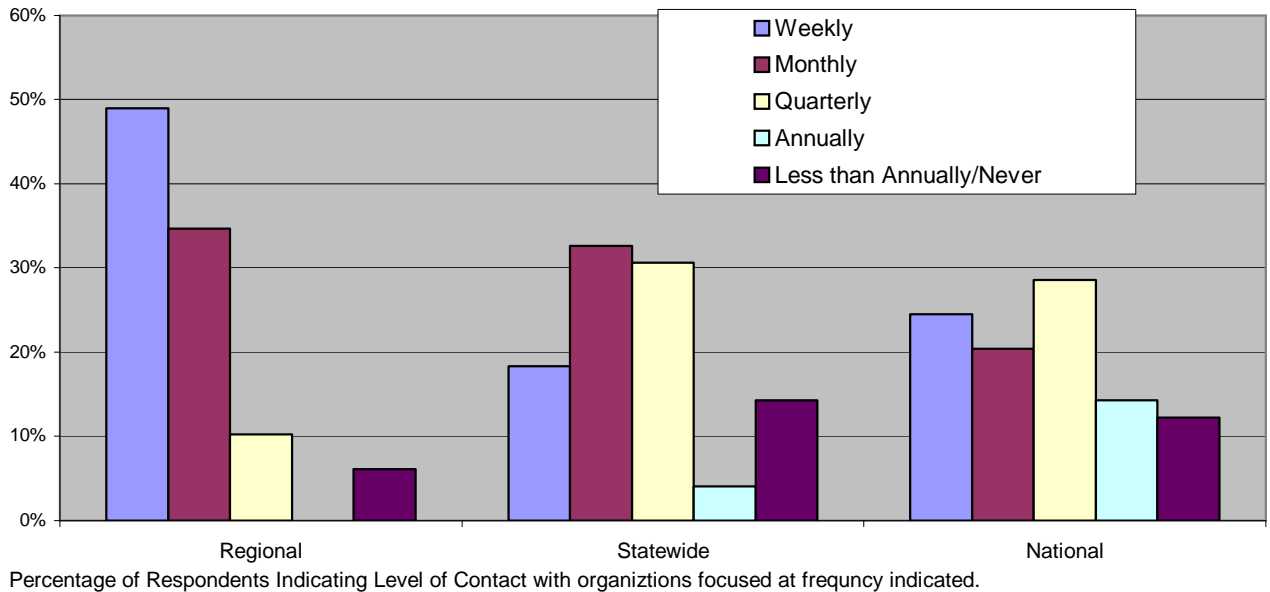
Our case studies suggest that in most CBO-regional relationships, there are pre-existing relationships between collaborating organizations, or at least familiarity with one another. In some cases, there was a multiple-stage process. The initial core of cooperating CBOs and regional organizations linked with each other. Once this was established, other organizations familiar with one or more of the new partners were recruited.

However, the nature of the pre-existing relationships varied from issue to issue. For example, the formation of CAAELII was aided by the initial connections among organizations within certain ethnic populations. On the one hand, these were all autonomous organizations driven by common needs, common languages, common communities, and common immigration experiences within the immigrant group. The organizations had similar structures and used similar approaches to organizing and delivering services to their constituencies. On the other hand, as outside "threats" appeared to the various immigrant communities--threats in the form of restrictive INS procedures and changes in public perceptions of some immigrant groups after 9-ll--strong incentives to coalesce emerged. The similar organization structures, processes, and missions facilitated these connections.

In other cases, regional coalitions were built on existing social networks. In the case of the Calumet Project, staff, board members, and other activists in the community were able to tap into decades-long relationships they had in the relatively homogeneous blue-collar industrial region. From labor unions and churches to city government and business networks, there were well-established social, economic, and political relationships among residents. Social network building has been part of the history of this region dating back to the union-organizing era in the 1930s and 1940s. In the 1970s, this strong networking capacity was still apparent. It led to the creation of the Bailly Alliance, a coalition that

stopped the construction of the Bailly nuclear power plant near Gary. This was the first successful anti-nuclear power plant campaign in the U.S. Not surprisingly then, in the 1990s, these strong networks facilitated the creation of the Calumet Project to address the threat represented by plant shutdowns and significant job loss.[17]

In other cases, the networks are less community-based than issue-based. In the case of the Tax Increment Reform collaboration, past work and networking around the issues of affordable housing on the part of the Leadership Council for Metropolitan Open Communities and the Statewide Housing Action Coalition was used as the basis for the cooperation among regional and community-based organizations. Similar in the relatively specialized policy area of transportation, past work by the Center for Neighborhood Technology allowed it to effectively recruit members for the Chicago Transportation and Air Quality Coalition (CTAQC). CNT's role in facilitating CTAQC was further enhanced by the Center's work in a broad range of other issues from affordable housing to community-based information technologies.

## WHAT WOULD FACILITATE GREATER CBO PARTICIPATION IN REGIONAL EFFORTS?

Nearly all of the respondents (45 of the 49) stated that more resources for their own organization, or similar community-based organizations, would be an important factor in facilitating greater participation of community groups on regional initiatives. Among the other factors identified by community organizations as potentially helping to increase linkages to regional groups were: more time to meet with other community groups (47 percent); more resources for state and regional organizations (41 percent); and more briefings on the issues (27 percent). The need for greater collaboration between community groups and regional organizations on projects and for funding was clearly identified. Another factor identified in the open-ended, "other" category was the need for greater representation of community groups in regional organization agenda setting (See Table 1 below).

### 1) FUNDING: NEED FOR MORE FLEXIBILITY AND EQUITY

In their more detailed responses, CBO leaders indicated that it is not merely more funding that is needed, but more *flexible* funding to allow them to explore local-to-regional linkages and developing policy areas in a more holistic manner. Money provided to CBOs for their participation in a specific regional initiative is not always enough. Because one policy initiative is invariably connected to another, having the ability to move into related policy areas without having to seek new funding provides a flexibility that community leaders view as critical for sustained CBO participation in regional, statewide, and national connections. For example, community residents see connections among education, jobs, affordable housing, health care, and transportation in their daily activities. Therefore it is natural for community-based organizations representing their interests to have a similar need for a holistic approach to policy.

CBO leaders noted that if they were to receive general operating funds to make connections between neighborhood concerns and regional initiatives, they would be able to develop stronger connections to regional initiatives and beyond. Restricted funding limits the ability of CBOs to react quickly to emerging local problems that might have regional solutions. The process of applying for and receiving new funding guarantees a one-year lag in response time to issues--a lag in response time during which

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[17]More discussion of social networks and industrial communities is provided in Thomas Fuecthman's *Steeples and Stacks: Religion and the Steel Crisis in Youngstown Ohio*; William Kornblum's *Blue Collar Community*; and Philip Nyden's *Steelworker Rank-and-File: The Political Economy of a Union Reform Movement*.

multiple employers may have moved thousands of jobs out of the region, local school funding could have been cut, and state legislation passed on an important issue affecting city and suburban neighborhoods without substantial CBO input.

CBO leaders also indicated that foundation support for general operating expenses related to CBO-regional connections, or at least more flexible funding, would increase their efficiency level in utilizing precious staff resources. The staff time needed to write proposals and engage in other fund-raising takes away from pressing day-to-day work of the neighborhood organizations--organizations that typically are always functioning on very tight budgets.

Another CBO concern was the inhibiting impact that receipt of governmental funding has on local-level organization engaging in regional activities--some of which may fall under the heading of advocacy. This is particularly the case with suburban organizations that are much more likely to have a higher portion of their budgets coming from public agencies. There was no solution for this dilemma offered by respondents, but this does point to the need for effective leadership training and assistance in managing CBO projects that are walking the line between service provision or community needs assessment and local organizing and connections to regional advocacy.

Respondents expressed concern about what they perceived as a limited amount of funds going to smaller community-based organizations compared to larger organizations (particularly citywide and regional groups). Organizations that did not routinely collaborate with other organizations felt that they are "penalized" for this in funding requests. Still other organizations that are quite willing to collaborate felt that when they apply for funds for local efforts, no money is left because regional and statewide organizations "drained" funding sources.

Overall, respondents are aware of how funding does encourage (or could encourage) stronger community-regional links. The process of creating inter-organizational working relationships was itself seen as an effective fund-raising strategy. First, many community-based organizations recognize that they are more likely to receive private and government funding when they work in conjunction with other local or regional organizations. Second, they are aware that funders find collaborations attractive because it is a more "efficient" way of giving money to a broad range of communities. Such collaborations allow organizations to pool and more efficiently use limited resources. Finally, local organizations realize that such collaborations linked them to information networks through which they would learn of available funding in the first place (in the case of foundation or government-generated requests for proposals).

Of the respondents who mentioned more resources for their organizations as an important factor, nearly all named more funds as a much-needed resource (43 of 45 responding). Over two-thirds named more staff as a needed resource, which is connected to funding. Two-fifths stated that the ability to attract and involve more student interns and volunteers would also represent important additional resources. Training on fundraising and grant writing as well as briefings on important regional issues were also mentioned as key resources by more than ten respondents each.

In open-ended responses, several respondents noted that they have limited leeway in spending grant or government funding for local-to-regional connections. Typically, such funding of community-based organizations for local initiatives does not have a "connection" component to link advocacy efforts or "lessons learned" to regional, statewide, or national organizations. Other CBOs mentioned a related need for more funding to support staff time to keep up-to-date on developing regional issues that might be related to local organizing (See Table 2).

## Table 1: Resources Helpful to Connect Community Organizations to Broader Issues

| What resources connect community-level organizations to broader issues? | Number Citing (out of 49 respondents) |
|---|---|
| More Resources for My Organization | 45 |
| More Time to Meet with Similar Community Organizations | 23 |
| More Resources to Regional and Statewide Organizations | 20 |
| More Briefings on the Issues | 13 |
| *More Collaboration between Groups to Get Funding for Project** | 11 |
| *More Autonomy for CBOs in Relation to Regional Organizations in Agenda Setting** | 8 |
| *Better Representation of Community by CBOs in Regional Organizations** | 4 |
| *More Focus by CBOs on an Issue, Making it a Priority** | 2 |
| *Better Follow-Through by Regional Organizations** | 1 |
| *More Mid-Level (i.e. city-wide, sub regional) Organizations to Serve as Intermediaries Between CBOs and Regional Organizations** | 1 |
| *Reducing Conflict with Goals of Other Organizations to Increase Collaboration** | 1 |

* Unsolicited Responses

## Table 2: Most Important Organizational Resources

| Which organizational resources would you find particularly helpful? | Number Citing (out of 49 respondents |
|---|---|
| More Funding | 43 |
| More Staff | 31 |
| More Interns from Colleges and Professional Schools | 18 |
| More Volunteer Assistance | 16 |
| More Workshops on Getting Funding, Writing Grant Proposals, etc. | 15 |
| More Training on Regional and Statewide Issues | 12 |
| *Reducing Current Restrictions on Funding that Allows only Narrow Scope of Activities** | 9 |
| *More Education, Time, and Info to Keep Up on Issues at Regional, State, National Level** | 7 |
| *More Opportunities to Go to Conferences** | 2 |
| *More Information Technology and Training** | 2 |
| *More Professionalization of Organization** | 1 |

* Unsolicited Responses

## 2) COMMUNICATION AND ONGOING PARTNERSHIPS

The form and frequency of communication between regional groups and community organizations have an impact on the involvement of CBOs in regional issues. Increasingly, routine communication among groups occurs with Internet technology. E-mail is becoming a more frequent form of contacting other groups. Listservs and message boards are also becoming more popular. While some informational meetings have been held to discuss emerging regional issues, CBO respondents indicated that limited follow-up by regional organizations after these meetings made them "unproductive." They feel that the

goals and visions of community regional collaboration need to be more explicit when informational or organizing meetings are held by regional organizations.

Where there are partnerships between community-based organizations and regional groups, they tend to be long-lasting. Once a mutual interest in a particular policy issue, such as affordable housing, early childhood education, or job development, is established, the resulting partnerships last because they serve both community and regional group interests. Ties between CBOs and regional organizations often revolve around linkages established and maintained by key local leaders. For example, local organization executive directors serving on the boards of regional organizations help to foster stable partnerships between their organization and the regional group, as well as among a network of CBOs represented on such boards.

Many regional organizations specifically develop their board memberships to create and sustain such networks. In fact, it is more likely that regional groups convene CBOs than CBOs to organize themselves around affect regional issues. This is partially related to funding. In seeking funding, regional organizations that focus on a particular issue can point to the potential regional or statewide impact of the work they do in their policy area, such as transportation or smart growth. This allows such organization to tap specialized funding sources and promise funders a broader impact of their funding dollars than multi-issue CBOs are able to do.

This is not to say that independent regional organizations are the only way to address citywide or regional issues. Community-based organizations can coalesce to create a CBO-controlled coalition. For example, the Balanced Development Coalition in Chicago--a network of primarily community-based organizations--has successfully fought for local policies and legislative changes that promote affordable housing in the city's communities. The Coalition has been coordinated by the Organization of the NorthEast (ONE) and the Logan Square Neighborhood Association (LSNA), both well-established organizations. Both organizations serve as umbrella groups for a range of community-based organizations, religious congregations, businesses, educational institutions, and ethnic mutual aid associations in their respective community areas of Chicago.

In this case, "multi-issue" CBOs organized around a common issue: balanced development and support for an inclusionary zoning ordinance in the City of Chicago that would include affordable housing (or developer payments to an affordable housing fund) in all new apartment and condominium developments. This has been successful in some initial efforts. The City now requires certain city-financed projects to include affordable housing. However, limited resources have posed a constant challenge for the CBO members in this network.

The success of the locally-controlled Coalition is evidence that independent regional organizations are not a prerequisite in gaining voice in citywide and regional efforts. In fact, some leaders of the coalition might argue that regional organizations interfere in local organizations gaining that voice. For example, Sarah Jane Knoy, Executive Director of ONE and a co-leader of the Coalition, is quick to emphasize the community-based nature of the Coalition. Knoy states: "[the] long-term goal is for organizing and not for community development corporations, not for developers to do the work. We're doing it." She continues to explain, "constituency organizations are controlling the politics. They came up with the policies. They came up with the concept on their own."[18]

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[18]Interview with Sarah Jane Knoy, Executive Director, Organization of the NorthEast (ONE), September 8, 2003, Chicago, IL.

3) DEMOCRATIZATION OF REGIONAL POLICY MAKING

A key finding, not entirely anticipated by the REI Working Group, emerged from the open-ended comments made by survey respondents suggesting a need for a stronger democratic culture in the regional policy making process. Many CBO leaders were emphatic in pointing to the need for the democratization of the regional policy advocacy and policy-making process. Respondents stated that community-based organizations need to be more actively involved in setting the agenda for regional policy initiatives. Leaders stated that regional organizations themselves need to be more representative of the communities in the cities and suburbs--particularly underserved communities. Respondents feel that regional organizations need to strengthen their grassroots ties and be less "top-down". One suburban economic development agency executive director felt that larger regional groups routinely hold meetings among themselves to plan strategies, but "rarely" get back to local community groups regarding the outcomes of such meetings. He argues that there is a need for a more "common orientation" among regional and neighborhood-based organizations. If regional organizations were more responsive to local needs, respondents feel that these neighborhood-level organizations would be more likely to use precious resources in participating in regional initiatives.

Some community-based organizations feel trapped by the regional funding and policy making "system." From their perspective, they feel that in order to get funding, smaller organizations are forced to seek out larger groups or coalitions of groups to collaborate with them. Consequently, important elements of their neighborhood agenda get lost in the process. They see the larger regional organizations furthering their own agenda, controlling communications, receiving more funding, and generally dominating the regional policy making and advocacy process. The leaders of smaller organizations perceive that they have been "used" in such circumstances and have had only limited impact on regional policy discussions.

Respondents specifically mentioned that from their perspective regional organizations routinely "co-opt" the work of the community group or take credit for community-based work. Local leaders want more CBO "autonomy" and more "mutual respect" between local and regional organizations. However, having made these critiques, a number of local organizations did point to some regional organizations that make noticeable efforts to incorporate community-level voice in their policy and strategy development. Among the positive examples of democratic regional organizations provided by CBO leaders in our survey were: the National Training and Information Center (NTIC), United Power for Action and Justice, Metro Alliance of Congregations, and Citizens Action of Illinois. For example, one fair housing organization leader observed that NTIC routinely offers to come to local meetings "without dominating the scene." They give community-based organizations the "latitude" to direct the process and "create an atmosphere of mutual respect which creates a more successful campaign."

Most of our case studies demonstrate that successful collaborative initiatives involve significant CBO involvement in setting the agenda and in shaping the process. For example, in the CAAELII and the Calumet Project collaborations there was a defined process of regular membership organization participation in agenda setting. The partnership between the Logan Square Neighborhood Association and the Gilead Center of United Power for Action and Justice around the KidCare initiative featured regular planning meetings, technical assistance, and adjustments according to the needs and challenges of the enrollment campaign. Not surprisingly, when constituent organizations have a greater voice in the direction of the initiative, they are more committed and involved in the coalition.

In contrast, when "collaboration" is mandated from the top down--either from funders or government entities--only limited cooperation emerges, or what partnership does emerge is fragile. For instance, the federally sponsored reverse commute demonstration project involving Suburban Job-Link represents a failed collaboration. While several organizations were brought in to create a regional plan to use $2 million in funding, many organizations ended their participation when they realized the funding was insufficient and the federal requirements on their participation were too demanding. Similarly, while the Predatory Lending task force initially began with the Chicago Federal Reserve convening several groups, only after the regional and community organizations decided to partner on their own without the Federal Reserve involvement, did the coalition move ahead effectively.

In other cases, if coalitions do not address local needs, CBO participants drop out of the network. For example, it was clear in the TIF reform initiative that different member organizations had alternative visions of what they wanted to see in TIF legislative reform. As the focus was placed more on housing, those organizations primarily interested in school funding and government accountability issues became less active in the coalition.

## LESSONS LEARNED AND CONCLUSIONS

PRESSING ISSUES GENERATE COALITIONS

In each of these case studies, the collaborative initiative began because community-based or regional organizations identified a pressing issue that affected their community interests or was central to their organizational mission. In many cases the issue would be described as a "crisis" or "emergency" situation where present policies adversely affected the quality of lives of community residents. In several instances, new issues emerged that existing organizations were not prepared to deal with individually. In other instances, an issue became a major priority for multiple community organizations and/or regional policy organizations at the same time. As these issues arose, the need for collaboration became mutually evident.

CAAELII formed out of a "crisis, in which the various organizations felt compelled to collaborate to challenge new policies associated with welfare reform. This also served to accentuate the need for reform in INS procedures. The Calumet Project formed in response to heavy job losses in an industrial region that had a long history of providing well-paid, stable, unionized jobs. Massive job losses and plant shutdowns seriously threatened the economic health of a previously stable region. The incentives for other organizations to collaborate with Suburban Job-Link was closely tied with perceptions of a variety of community-based organizations--both in and outside of the job development area-- that the spatial mismatch separating jobs from low-income communities needed to be addressed through innovative solutions. The reverse commute transportation strategy provided such a solution. The Tax Increment Financing reform effort occurred because problems with TIF law was perceived as a crucial issue both among SHAC members organization as well as other regional and community-based organizations. In this case even local elected officials and other state lawmakers recognized that there were problems in the current TIF law and procedures.

The KidCare collaboration addressed the lack of health coverage, a perceived need of the Logan Square community, as well as many other communities, because enrolling in KidCare had become so difficult. This was also an initiative that had the blessings of local elected officials, since enrollment in KidCare provided additional resources to the local community without tapping into local government budgets. The Predatory Lending Task Force formed when several organizations in the city

simultaneously noticed an increase in the number of foreclosures and began efforts to address this concern.  Local horror stories of older homeowners losing properties through predatory lending helped to underscore the need for reform in the eyes of many local leaders.  Similarly, widespread perception of the gentrification threat to affordable private-market housing made formation of an assessment reform coalition easier.   Difficulties in overcoming obstacles to citizen participation in Chicago transportation policy-making despite federal reforms mandating public participation, spurred both regional and community-based organizations to coalesce in forming CTAQC.

FUNDING AND STAFFING

Clearly, funding is closely connected to the development and success of community-regional collaborations.   Because community-based organization staff typically are already stretched in their efforts to address immediate community needs, involvement in coalitions outside their immediate organizations potentially threatens the stability of local efforts or even the organization itself.   Additional funding to local organizations participating in such regional coalitions or funding for regional coalition staff that directly assist community-level organizations is a critical factor in success.

Not surprisingly, efforts involving existing formal regional organizations or formal coalitions (with formal written procedures, defined membership roles and staffing structures) were more able to obtain funding than ad hoc issue-based campaigns involving networks of independent organizations.  In the latter group of initiatives, funding and staffing for collaboration usually came out of general operating funds of the collaborating organizations.   This means that short-term issue oriented campaigns have a built-in financial limit to their activity level and life.   The limits of precious local organization resources will limit the life of the initiative, but also put pressure on the initiative to achieve successes quickly.

When assessing likelihood of initiative success or failure before they make a decision on funding, foundations have been skeptical of funding unproven, ad hoc collaborations.  A key question remains as to how local communities, foundations, government, or other funding bodies can identify which promising informal, ad hoc collaborations will develop into effective regional initiatives, if funded.  Clearly, support for such new organizations is important if funding agencies are to remain receptive to developing needs in the region.

The funding issue is also of particular importance in the current austere funding environment for non-profit organizations in general.[19]   Many nonprofits have been forced to close down and most have faced tightening budgets (due in large part to State of Illinois budget cuts).  This has led to elimination of programs, little or no hiring of staff, and a reduction in the ability to enter into new programs or campaigns.[20]  Of additional concern is increased scrutiny, or threats of increased scrutiny, by the federal government of organizations using public funds for advocacy work.  This is particularly relevant for suburban community-level organizations, which are often themselves either quasi-governmental entities or heavily funded by local government.   On the one hand, restrictions on use of funds for advocacy further limits access to funding for community-regional advocacy work.   On the other hand, it points to the need to coordinate research, evaluation, education, and outreach work--which is fundable by most government sources--and advocacy which can take this knowledge and move it into the formal policy-making process.

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[19]See for example Donors Forum of Chicago (2003) and Gronbjerg (2003).
[20]See Mullman (2003, 2004), Storch (2004) and Rafter (2002).

TECHNOLOGY AND COMMUNICATION

Access to new technologies, such as e-mails, internet-based networking, and even fax distributions, proved to be a major asset to many of the community-level organizations in the survey and case studies. E-mail and faxing, as well as some networking capabilities, were used in many of the collaborations to communicate more efficiently. For example, e-mails were an important ingredient to CAAELII's mission to improve its collaboration. The TIF reform collaboration frequently communicated via e-mail and used some new software to allow multiple users to work on the draft legislation simultaneously. CTAQC has used e-mail and fax to distribute regular updates and alerts to both its members and other interested entities, as well as having an extensive web site.

With rapidly improving access to new communication technologies, and the reduction of costs of computers, software, and internet access, some of these obstacles will disappear. However, because keeping up with new technology is often seen as a secondary issue to many community-based organizations faced with pressing local "human" concerns, CBOs are not always taking advantage of inexpensive, powerful new technologies. Regional organizations promoting more effective use of technology have existed in the Chicago region at various times and with varying levels of success. However universities also could be more effectively utilized in these community-based technology innovation arenas. Higher education institutions have the interest and capacity to develop hardware and software, as well as the social and organizational application of new technologies. A more conscious involvement of universities in the development of grassroots-level technologies could lead to strengthened community organizations and more effective local-regional ties.

CREATIVE IDEAS PRODUCED BY LOCAL-REGIONAL ALLIANCES... AND TENSIONS

Collaborations have produced an effective, dynamic relationship among grassroots organizations and regional policy organizations that has been mutually beneficial. While policy organizations and community-based organizations sometimes differ in their goals and their view of success, each brings a particular perspectives and a particular set of assets to the collaborative process. Community-based organizations can be critical in developing and maintaining public support for an initiative. They can provide a regular reality check that measures how the policy campaign strategies and alternative solutions are playing in local communities. Likewise, regional organizations have access to staff, researchers, former elected officials, past community-activists, and other "experts" who have followed the policy areas for years and are familiar with the programs and political history of the issue. This overview and knowledge is critical in successful campaigns for policy change.

Certainly local organizations can have access to this information, but typically, it is the regional organizations that have specialized in particular issues or have easy access to researchers or national leaders who specialize in such issues. The expertise of lawyers and assistance from former legislators in working on TIF reform collaboration proved crucial, as did efforts to keep multiple community organizations and their constituents engaged in and supportive of the effort. Knowledge of the KidCare issue and laws by Gilead staff--then training LSNA staff on these issues--was essential to that collaboration; likewise, the reputation and relationship of LSNA with the members of its community allowed them to work with residents. In the Predatory lending work, both the strength of the Woodstock Institute in research and technical policy and the strength of NTIC and SWOP in organizing and making connections to community residents proved crucial to success in the policy arena. Use of policy experts in drafting an argument for assessment reform, combined with grassroots involvement and organizing of community residents, added up to successful reform of property assessment law. Similarly, the role of

former elected officials in CTAQC's advocacy efforts combined with the breadth and representativeness of its membership have allowed them to influence regional planning decisions.

## SUBURBAN COMMUNITY-BASED EXPERIENCE IS DIFFERENT FROM THAT IN THE CITY

In the suburbs, organizations representing resident interests are often directly or indirectly connected to local government.  In some cases, the organizations are units of the local government or get substantial funding from local government.  In other cases, such resident organizations have a close, cooperative relationship with local government.   While there are exceptions, the confrontational character that often has colored the relationship between community-based organizations in the city of Chicago and its relationship to local elected officials is not as prevalent in the suburbs.  This means that suburban community-level organization involvement in regional initiatives is more likely to also bring a stronger local government relationship with it.  This is not necessarily a plus or a minus, but it does represent a qualitatively different experience that contrasts with the long history of confrontational community-based politics in the city over past decades.  Because the suburban population of the metropolitan area is now larger than the city (and growing), the abilities of coalitions to recognize this new reality will be directly related to their ability to build a broad base and succeed.   There may be increased receptivity among community organizations to suburban-city policy linkages in the future, given the demographics of suburban growth.   Also one cannot make assumptions about the politics and demographics of suburbs.  The suburbs--particularly inner ring and older suburbs--are increasingly diverse racially, ethnically, and economically.   They share many of the same issues and challenges as city communities.

## DEMOCRATIZATION AND BROAD COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT ARE KEY TO COALITION SUCCESS

As noted earlier in the report, community-based organization leaders emphasize the need for democratic approaches in setting the policy agenda.  Some local leaders expressed resentment that relatively small regional organizations are setting the agenda for a much larger group of community-based organizations.  In some cases, these regional organizations with four or five staff are dwarfed by community-level organizations with as many as 50 or more staff members.  Also, because equity is at the heart of many of the policy issues in which these regional organizations are involved, it is only logical that coalition and regional organization behaviors reflect this equity. Equally as important is the inclusion of representatives from underserved communities.

In their book, *Place Matters: Metropolitics for the Twenty-First Century*, Peter Dreier, John Mollenkopf, and Todd Swanstrom search for a better system of regional policy-making after documenting the substantial inequities we see between cities and suburbs, among suburbs, and among neighborhoods in the same city.   They warn that in "a metropolitan landscape characterized by economic segregation and sprawl, a rising tide does not lift all boats" (Dreier et al, 260).  They add that "[n]ot only are places becoming economically isolated from the mainstream; they are becoming politically cut off as well" and conclude that the "revival of American democracy requires new political institutions at the metropolitan level.  We all have a stake in this (260)."

Our report has focused on one of the potential elements in such a revival—a stronger relationship between community-based organizations and regional networks.   Such connections go to the heart of the democratic process in contemporary American society.  Our case studies and our analysis are presented not as a critique of existing local-regional relationships.  Rather, they are presented as a map of what has been successful, what might be strengthened, and ultimately what relationships might be most effective in

giving all citizens a fair voice in shaping the policies that affect their everyday, personal opportunities, as well as the more general well-being of their communities.

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## Appendix A: Detailed Information on Methodology

SAMPLING PROCEDURES

The total population of organizations from which the sample was selected was more than 400. A random sampling process was employed to select organizations.  Each organization was assigned a number at random.  A random number list was then constructed.  Every fifth number from the list was selected and compared with the numbers attributed to the organizations.  If there was not a match, the next fifth number from the list was chosen, and so on, until a match was found.   A total of 160 organizations were included in the sample, in four waves of 30 (and one of 40) until our goal of 50 responses (49 valid interviews completed) was achieved.

The random sample was drawn from organizations divided by their geographic area and issue area. There were nine geographic areas: the City of Chicago was broken down into four categories: Loop, North, South, and West; suburban municipalities in Cook County were divided by their location north or south of a line extending from the Eisenhower Expressway; and an aggregate of counties outside of Cook County, including Northwest Indiana.  With the exception of one respondent from Kane and Lake County organizations are not represented in our final organizations responding to our survey. However, our sample was not significantly different from the general distribution of community organizations in suburban counties.  For example, DuPage County and Northwest Indiana CBOS are better represented among the suburban communities outside of suburban Cook County.

Approximately three business days after the surveys were sent out, the executive directors of the organizations sampled were called and asked if they would like to participate (See Appendix A for interview schedule).  Unless the request to participate was rejected directly, up to six calls were made to the organization to identify the appropriate person in the organization to give approval for participation and to answer the survey questions. If an organization consented to be interviewed, a convenient time and date were scheduled for a return call to complete the survey.  All interviews were conducted by telephone.

After early survey returns, we discovered that organizations on the South and West Sides of Chicago and the southern suburbs of Cook County, which typically serve racial and ethnic minorities, were not well represented in completed surveys.  While the random sampling process was not abandoned, organizations in areas heavily populated by racial and ethnic minorities were over-sampled in the final wave and additional efforts were made to solicit those organizations from our earlier waves.

SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

1.  Please provide a brief description of your organization, its mission, and what geographic or community areas you serve.

2.  Over the past five years has your organization been involved in any activities (service provision, community education, organization, lobbying, or other work) that had any relevance to regional, statewide, or national policy issues or have had influence on policies in these areas?

IF YES,

2A. Obtain a brief description of the issue. [issues, get descriptions of the top three]

2B.  In terms of these activities, did your organization/agency do all the work itself? Did you work with other community-based organizations? Did you work with other regional, statewide, or national organizations?  Which ones?  [If multiple issues identified in 2A, get answers for each one]

2C.  Did they contact you or did you contact them? [Obtain for each issue area]

2D.  Indicating what portion of time your organization spends on each area, would you classify it as: [CHECK ALL THE APPLY]
> advocacy
> organizing
> service provision
> public information
> community development
> other

IF NO,

2E.  What are the primary reasons you and other community-based organizations have not had contact or have not had frequent contact with regional, statewide, or national organizations?

3.  Approximately how much contact do you have by phone, fax, e-mail, mail, or meetings with organizations that are primarily focused on work at the regional level (beyond your city or neighborhood)? Statewide? Nationwide?

With those regional organizations you are in contact with, is this contact at least:

> weekly?
> monthly?
> four times a year?
> annually?

With those statewide organizations you are in contact with, is this contact at least:

     weekly?
     monthly?
     four times a year?
     annually?

With those national organizations you are in contact with, is this contact at least:

     weekly?
     monthly?
     four times a year?
     annually?

4.  What resources would you find particularly helpful to better connect community-level organizations to broader issues and policy initiatives?  [CHECK ALL THAT APPLY]

     more briefings on the issues by regional or statewide organizations
     more resources (staffing, funding, etc.) to regional and statewide organizations to pursue  regional and statewide issues
     more time to meet with similar community-level organizations to determine common interests and needs--information that then could shape regional and statewide policy work
     more resources for your organization to build your own capacity to do this kind of work

IF CHECKED, which of the following types of resources would you find particularly helpful?

     more staff
     more funding
     more volunteer assistants who could work with you on these issues
     more interns from colleges, professional schools who could work with you on these issues
     more training on regional and statewide issues
     more workshops on getting funding, who to contact for funding, and how to write grant proposals
     other?

To help us understand your organization's capacity, there are three final questions:

5.  How many full-time staff do you have?

6.  How many part-time staff do you have?

7.  Approximately what is you annual budget for fiscal year 2001?

QUESTIONS FOR CASE STUDIES

**Interviews are to be conversational in nature – not direct question and answer.  Questions on community-regional/state/national organizational partnership details are followed by more general questions related to an assessment of the partnerhip.**

**Organization and Community/Population**

- Please describe your organization, its mission, and its key activities.
- What community area(s) do you serve? What population(s) do you serve?
- What is the size of your budget?
- Who are your major funders/where does your revenue come from?
- What is your full-time and part-time staff?

**Issue and Importance**
- What was the nature of the policy issue that you were involved in working on?
- How important an issue was it to individual communities?  To the region, state, national as a whole?
- (For multi-issue organizations)  Are there difficulties for your organization (in terms of resource/staff time) to commit to one regional issue while there are other issues you also need to be addressing on the community level?   How do you do this?

**History of Issue**
- Was there some previous activity on this issue?  Who was involved with that?
- When did your organization become involved in this issue?

**Activity/Initiative**

I.      Please describe the specific project or initiative you were involved in.  What programmatic area(s) were entailed in this project?
II.     What was the goal of the project?  What were the expected outcomes?
III.    What was the geographic area of focus, i.e. level you were attempting to influence?  (City-wide, suburban area, sub-region, metro area, state, national)
IV.     Was the focus of the project grassroots organizing or public relations/media, or a mixture of the two?
V.      Who was involved in the collaboration?
      i.      Regional organizations and networks
      ii.     Community-based organizations
      iii.    Other organizations (e.g. universities)
      iv.     Government Agencies
      v.      Elected officials
      vi.     Other
VI.     What was the structure of the campaign?  Was it more hierarchical, or more collaborative/cooperative?
VII.    What were some effective strategies employed in the project (legal, media, grassroots organizing, politically directed)?
VIII.   What were some ineffective strategies; how did you alter these?
IX.     What were some roadblocks to success/collaboration?

X.  What resources were used?
    i.     Staff
    ii.    Grants/Funds
    iii.   Volunteers
    iv.   Dues (when collaborative organization formed)
    v.    Other
XI.  What additional resources were needed or would have been most useful?
XII.  Was the media used as a resource? How?  Were courts used as a resource? How?

**Linkage with Organizations**

- What was the nature of contact with other organizations?
- Who initiated project?
- Who initiated contact during the project?  How was information communicated?
- How effective was the communication (e.g. meetings)?  How could it have been made more effective?
- What was the nature of the relationship(s) prior to collaboration?
- What was the nature of the collaboration (committee, meetings, shared staff)?
- How high a priority was the initiative for participant organizations?
- Did this initiative involve both city and suburban community organizations?  Was there difficulty in involving organizations from the suburbs (or the city)?
- How much input did community residents have in this activity?
- How much input did you and your organization have in the initiative - its goals and process?
- Was this sufficient?
- How could and/or should you have been more involved?
- How was credit given to various involved groups/individuals?
- In the areas in which your organization focuses its efforts, what are the most prominent citywide, regional and statewide organizations?
- Have they been effective at bringing about changes?
- When they have been effective, why is that so?
- When they have been ineffective, why is that so?

**Activity Outcomes**

- What were the outcomes of the project?
- What are future possible outcomes?

**Additional Outcomes**

- What was the effect on partnering organizations?
- Development of organizational capacity?
- Nurturing leaderships?
- Fostering future collaboration?
- Is there a need to develop a stronger community-based leadership capable of linking to regional issues?

## Overview questions

A.  What were the strengths and limitations of the collaborative process?

B.  What could you or other organizations have done differently to improve the collaboration on this issue?

C.  How can this collaboration be replicated on other issues?

D.  Are some issues more amenable to regional approaches than others (e.g. transportation and environment)?   Where does your issue(s) fit into the amenable scale for local-to-regional connections?

E.  What does it "cost" to get involved at a regional level?  (e.g. staff and volunteer time as well as cashing in on your political good will with elected officials)

F.  Is there a need to "democratize" community-to-regional connections?  How important is that regional connections be from the community up rather than the regional organization down, or does it make a difference?

G.  Is there a need for more community resident involvement?

H.  Some people say there are too many "professionals" involved at the regional level and not enough community residents or CBO representatives.  Do you think this is the case?

I.  Some of our early interviewees said that there is a significant problem in low-income, underserved communities in terms of CBO presence and capacity.   Do you think this is a problem?   If a problem, how would you think this could be resolved?

J.  Should CBOs be given more resources/capacity to teach regional organizations, govt., foundation, etc. about their issues?   Do you have any specific ideas about how this might happen, given your own organizations experience in linking local to regional issues?

K.  Is there a problem of competition among CBOs that interferes with their involvement in broader, regional coalitions?   Between CBOs and regional organizations?

L.  What difficulties are there in connection organizations from different parts of the region (e.g. city and suburban organizations) to work on an issue?  How can these be overcome?

## Appendix B: Tables and Charts

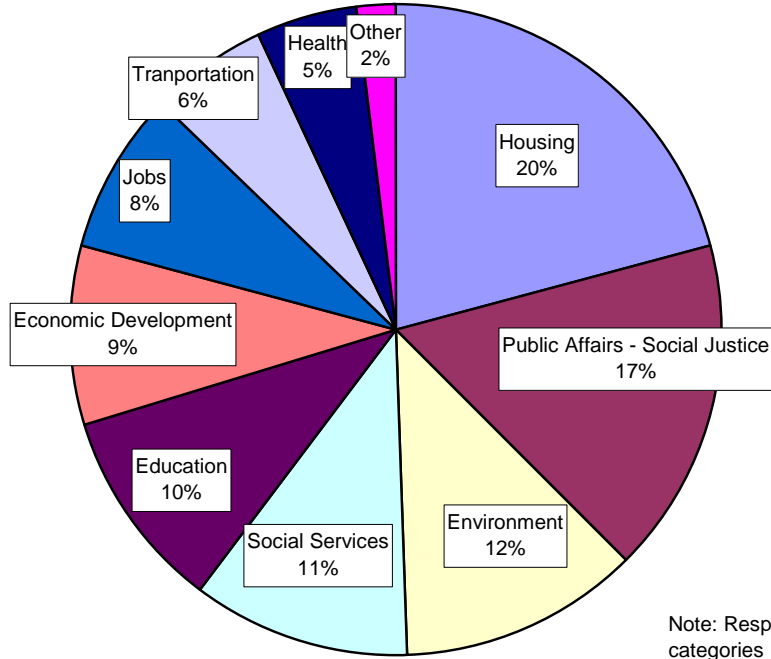### *Chart 2: Programmatic Area of Regional Initiatives*



Other 2%
Health 5%
Tranportation 6%
Jobs 8%
Economic Development 9%
Education 10%
Social Services 11%
Environment 12%
Housing 20%
Public Affairs - Social Justice 17%

Note: Respondents can be included in multiple categories

### *Chart 3: Full Time Staff of Organization*

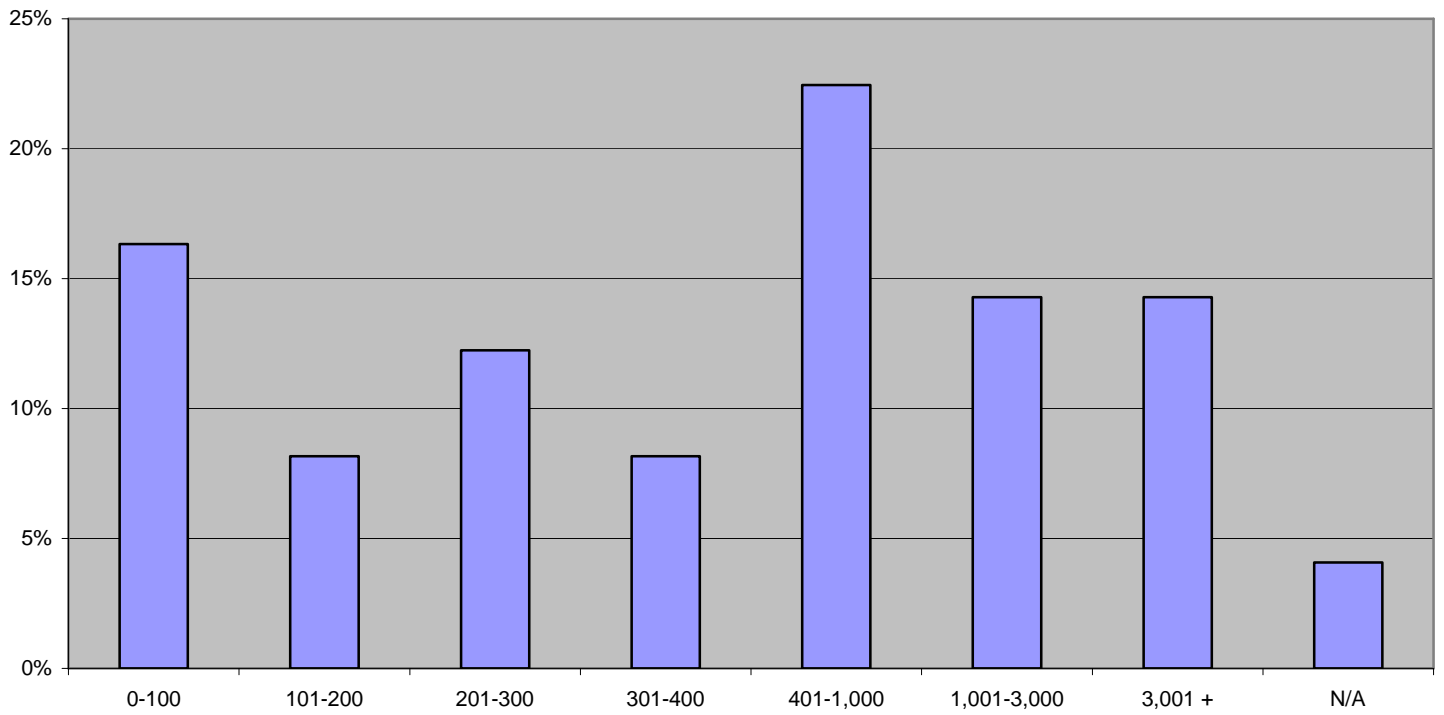| | 25% | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
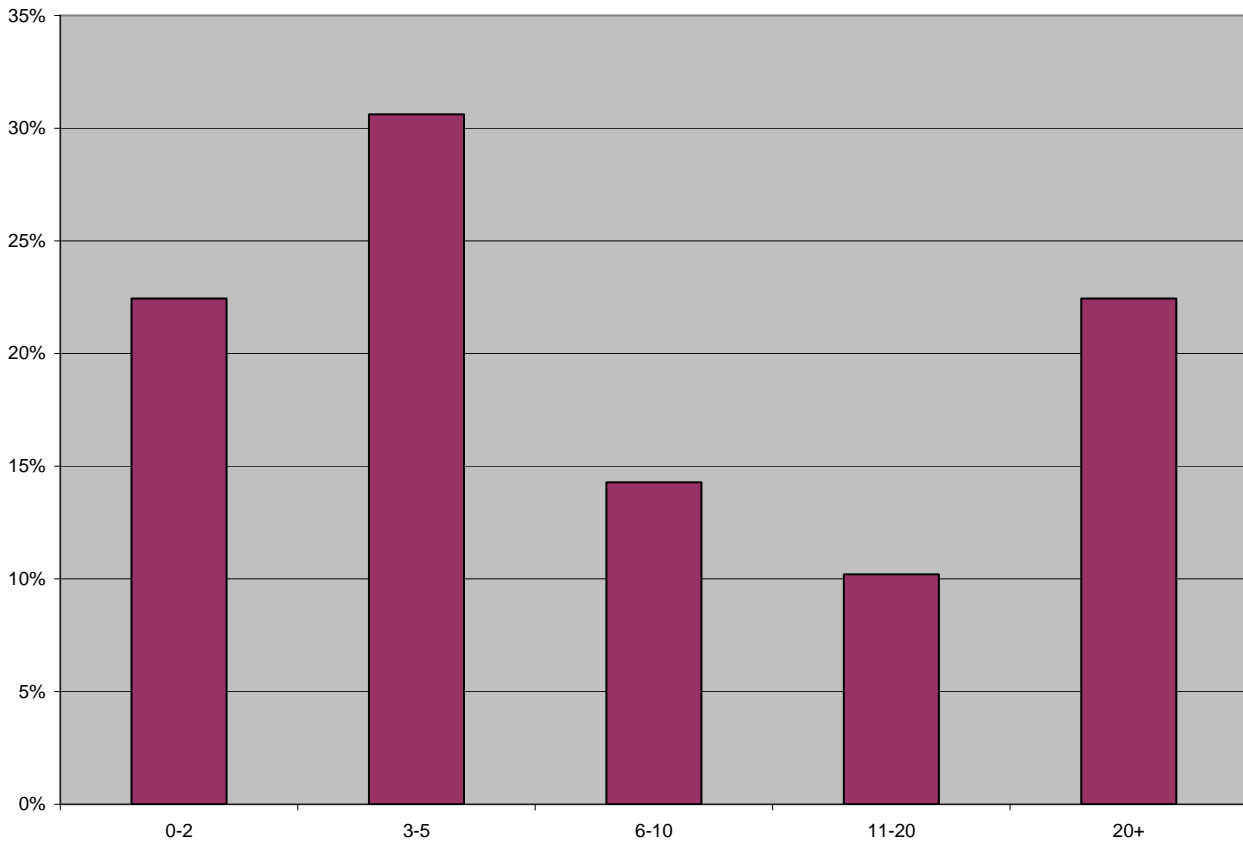
*Chart 5: Respondent Primary Location by Geographic Region*
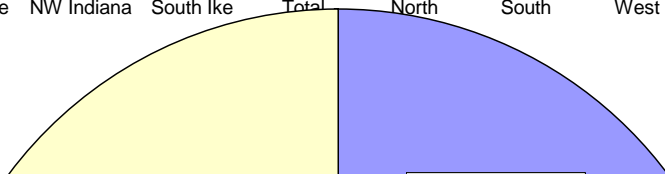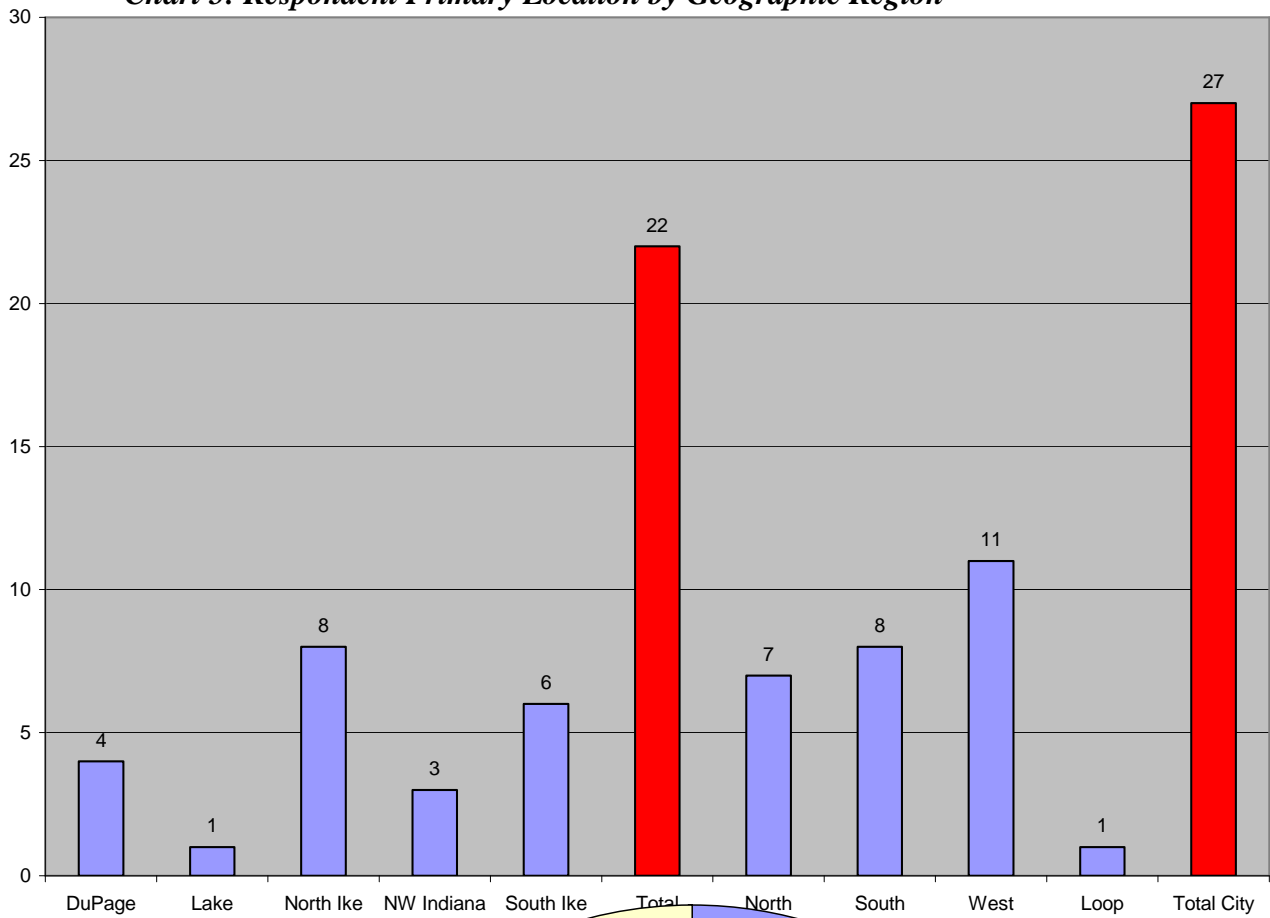
***Chart 7: Nature of Communication on Collaborative Projects***

Other organizations contacted respondent
24%

Contact was Mutual
43%

Respondent contacted other organizations
33%

***Chart 8: Activity of Initiatives***

Community Development
14%

Advocacy
30%

Service Provision

*Table 3: Named Regional, State, and National Organizations*

**Twenty Regional, State, National Organizations most named as partners by respondents.**

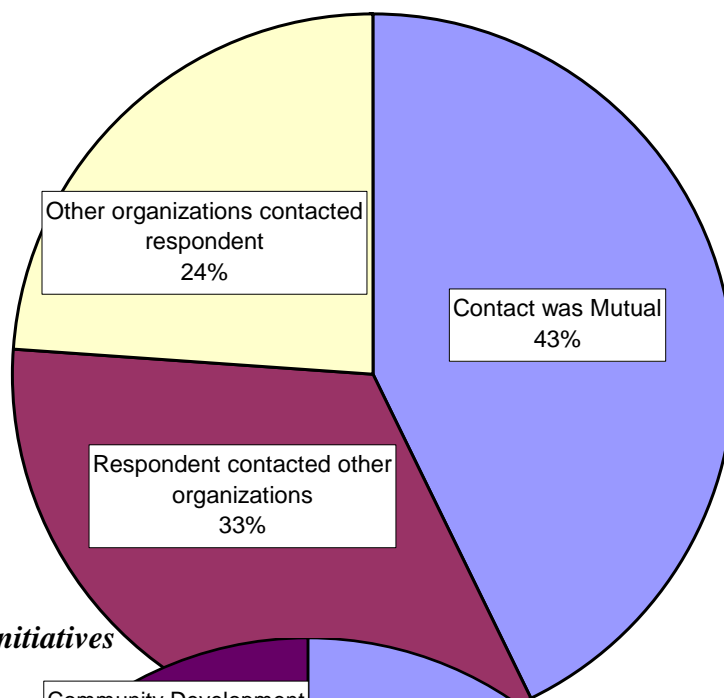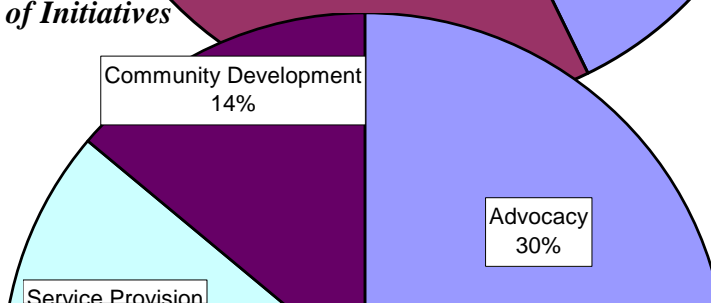| Regional Organization | Times Named |
|---|---|
| Regional Manufacturing Training Collaborative | 4 |
| Chicago Rehab Network | 4 |
| National Training and Information Center (NTIC) | 4 |
| BPI | 4 |
| Metropolitan Planning Council | 4 |
| NIPC | 4 |
| Chicago Fair Housing Alliance | 3 |
| Statewide Housing Action Coalition | 3 |
| CANDO | 3 |
| Chicago Jobs Council | 3 |
| HUD | 3 |
| AHAND | 3 |
| United Power for Action and Justice | 3 |
| Metropolis 2020 | 2 |
| Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights | 2 |
| National Assoc. for the Education of Young Children | 2 |
| Predatory Lending Task Force | 2 |
| LISC | 2 |
| National Fair Housing Alliance | 2 |

| Case Study | Collaborative Effort | Regional Issue | Principal Community Partner | | Distinctive Features | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | CAAELII (Coalition of African, Asian, European, and Latino Immigrants of Illinois) | Immigrant Rights | CAAELII | Group of CBOs work together to form regional collaborative organization | Primarily City of Chicago coalition, issues at local offices of federal agencies/policies; some metropolitan, statewide, and national issue focus | Diversity of constituents and community areas served |
| 2 | Calumet Project for Industrial Jobs | Employment, Economic development | Calumet Project for Industrial Jobs | Group of CBOs formed area/regional collaborative organization | Industrial Job Retention in NW Indiana, parts of NE Illinois | Strictly non-City of Chicago in focus |
| 3 | Reverse commute program model | Spatial Mismatch, Employment | Suburban Job-Link | Service-based CBO work on issue regional in nature | Service area growth to city-wide | Work with metro area and national organizations |
| 4 | TIF Reform Collaboration | Tax Increment Financing, Housing | Statewide Housing Action Coalition (SHAC) | Collaboration between CBOs, regional orgs, associations of CBOS | Work on statewide policy, implementation at municipal level | |
| 5 | KidCare Collaboration | Child Health Care | Logan Square Neighborhood Association (LSNA) | Collaboration between CBO and regional organization (United Power - Gilead Center) | State Policy - work done primarily at local levels | Emphasis on Public Information, Service, Advocacy Secondary |
| 6 | Ad Hoc Predatory Lending Task Force | Housing, Community Development | Woodstock Institute | Collaboration between CBOS, associations of CBOs, regional organizations | Issue largely city and metro area in focus, with implications for areas outside region | |
| 7 | Residential Property Tax Assessment Reform Collaboration | Housing | West Town Leadership United (WTLU) | CBO organized activity, brought on board additional CBOs, regional orgs | Issue at county level, initially with local focus | Implications of collaboration for related advocacy initiative |
| 8 | Chicagoland Transportation and Air Quality Commission (CTAQC) | Transportation | CTAQC | Collaborative between CBOs, regional organizations, interest orgs, and public officials | Focus on regional transportation policy | |

| Case Study | Collaborative Effort | Regional Issue | Principal Community Partner | Type of Activity | Funding | Collaboration Staffing | Participation | Trigger |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | CAAELII (Coalition of African, Asian, European, and Latino Immigrants of Illinois) | Immigrant Rights | CAAELII | Formal Coalition | Foundation Grants | Full-Time Staff and Volunteers | Formal Membership | Change in Welfare Reform Law - Organizations Unprepared for New Issues |
| 2 | Calumet Project for Industrial Jobs | Employment, Economic development | Calumet Project for Industrial Jobs | Formal Coalition | Membership Fees and Foundation Grants | 4 Full-Time Staff | Formal Membership | Job Loss in Area - New Problems in Region |
| 3 | Reverse commute program model | Spatial Mismatch, Employment | Suburban Job-Link | Inter-organizational Collaboration | Federal Grants | No Staff | Funding Required | Sprawl created spatial mismatch in employments and residency - emerging issue |
| 4 | TIF Reform Collaboration | Tax Increment Financing, Housing | Statewide Housing Action Coalition (SHAC) | Ad Hoc Campaign | Unspecified Organizational Funds | Staffed by Intern | Informal Organizations and Individuals | TIF law encouraging gentrification - new issue as TIFS increasingly used |
| 5 | KidCare Collaboration | Child Health Care | Logan Square Neighborhood Association (LSNA) | Inter-organizational Collaboration | Regional Organization Funded Program | Full Time Staff and Volunteers | Formal Structure | Little public knowledge, use of KidCare - new state health insurance program |
| 6 | Ad Hoc Predatory Lending Task Force | Housing, Community Development | Woodstock Institute | Ad Hoc Campaign | Unspecified Organizational Funds | No Staff | Informal Organizations and Individuals | Increasing number of mortgage foreclosures in low-income communities - change in nature of issue |
| 7 | Residential Property Tax Assessment Reform Collaboration | Housing | West Town Leadership United (WTLU) | Inter-organizational Collaboration | Unspecified Organizational Funds | 1 Full Time Staff, Portions of Other Staff Time | Informal Organizations and Individuals | Assessment practice hurting low-income residents in gentrifying neighborhoods - new issue for community |
| 8 | Chicagoland Transportation and Air Quality Commission (CTAQC) | Transportation | CTAQC | Formal Coalition | Regional Organization Funded Program | 4 Full-Time Staff; portion of other staff time | Formal Structure | Lack of citizen voice in transportation policy, timing of formal regional transportation planning process |

## Appendix C: Organizations Participating in Telephone Survey

| Organization | City |
| --- | --- |
| Adult Basic Education | Michigan City |
| Alliance of Residents Concerning O'Hare | Arlington Heights |
| Bethlehem Community Development Corporation | Harvey |
| Calumet Project for Industrial Jobs | Hammond |
| CEDA Northwest | Mount Prospect |
| Center for Neighborhood Technology | Chicago |
| Center of Concern | Park Ridge |
| Chicago Child Care Society | Chicago |
| Chicago Manufacturing Institute | Chicago |
| Chicago Mutual Housing Network | Chicago |
| Citizen Advocacy Center | Elmhurst |
| Claretian Associates Neighborhood Development | Chicago |
| Deborah's Place | Chicago |
| Des Plaines River Watershed Alliance | Chicago |
| Diversity, Inc | East Hazel Crest |
| Eighteenth Street Development Corporation | Chicago |
| Elmhurst Economic Development Corporation | Elmhurst |
| Erie Neighborhood House | Chicago |
| Evanston Environmental Association | Evanston |
| Evanston Neighborhood Conference | Evanston |
| Family Focus | Chicago |
| Genesis Housing Development Corporation | Chicago |
| Glenview Prairie Preservation Project | Glenview |
| Greater North Pulaski Development Corp. | Chicago |
| Greater West Town Project | Chicago |
| HICA of North Lawndale, Inc. | Chicago |
| Hispanic Housing Development Corporation | Chicago |
| Housing Helpers, Inc. | Riverside |
| Instituto del Progreso Latino | Chicago |
| Interfaith Housing Center | Winnetka |
| Lake County Minority Health Coalition | Gary |
| Logan Square Neighborhood Association | Chicago |
| Metropolitan Alliance of Congregations | Joliet |
| Mid-South Planning and Development | Chicago |
| Neighborhood Capital Budget Group | Chicago |
| Neighborhood Housing Services of Chicago | Chicago |
| Nobel Neighbors | Chicago |
| North River Commission | Chicago |
| Oak Park Regional Housing Center | Oak Park |
| Organization of the Northeast | Chicago |
| People for Community Recovery | Chicago |
| People's Resource Center | Wheaton |
| Service Jobs for Progress | Waukegan |
| South Suburban Action Conference | Hazel Crest |
| South Suburban Housing Center | Homewood |
| Southeast Environmental Task Force | Chicago |
| Suburban Job Link Corporation | Chicago |
| Voice of the People | Chicago |
| YWCA Child Care Resources and Referral | Glen Ellyn |

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