



- **The Training & Technical Assistance Institute**
- **The Financing and Sustainability Institute**
- **The Practice Tools Institute**

CONCEPT PAPER: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

August 1, 2002

I. INTRODUCTION

This concept paper describes the Center for Community Builders (CCB). The mission of the CCB is to improve outcomes for residents of low-income communities of color by strengthening the capacities of practitioners and their organizations and elevating their voices and influence in the community building field.

The CCB will address critical information and training needs of practitioners through its three Institutes including:

- **The Training and Technical Assistance Institute**, providing peer professional development experiences, training and technical assistance;
- **The Financing and Sustainability Institute**, providing information and technical assistance on sustainability and resource development, and direct financial support to community building efforts; and
- **The Practice Tools Institute**, developing information and tools on effective program and practice models, research and evaluation, policy development and advocacy, organizational development and technology.

The CCB reflects the experience and thinking of the five organizations that operated as the lead agencies for the Rebuilding Communities Initiative (RCI), sponsored by the Annie E. Casey Foundation. We believe that the

experiences of the RCI sites are representative of a growing number of practitioners around the country who have operated on the “front lines” of community building and who can contribute greatly to the development of their colleagues, communities of color, and the field.

As the community building approach has gathered momentum in recent years, a variety of research, intermediary and technical assistance organizations have emerged to provide support to the field. Consistent with community building principles and practices, the founders see these organizations as potential partners in the development of the CCB, combining their skills and expertise with those of the practitioners to create the capacities needed for the institutes to meet their goals of quality information, tools and support services for practitioners from practitioners.

II. THE RCI EXPERIENCE

The Rebuilding Communities Initiative (RCI) was an eight-year comprehensive community building initiative which demonstrated how troubled, economically disenfranchised neighborhoods can be transformed into safe, supportive, and productive environments for children, families and residents. Launched in 1994 by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, RCI was implemented through established community-based development organizations in five cities across the country. These organizations—Dudley Street Neighborhood

Initiative in Boston, Germantown Settlement in Philadelphia, Marshall Heights Community Development Organization in Washington, D.C., NEWSED Community Development Corporation in Denver, and Warren/Conner Development Corporation in Detroit—have been at the forefront of the burgeoning community building movement.

Anticipating the final year of RCI in 2001, in early 2000, representatives from the sites renewed prior discussions about how to sustain and deepen the local and collective work of the initiative. The site representatives concluded that the experience and knowledge accumulated through RCI, as well as their prior work, have significant value for other community development practitioners engaged in a wide range of neighborhood and family improvement efforts. They also concluded that other practitioners have rich experiences and knowledge to share with their colleagues. The founding organizations set out to explore how to connect with other community builders to advance the work and elevate the collective knowledge of practitioners to the center of the dialogue and leadership for effective community building strategies.

III. FOCUS OF THE CCB

Knowledge and Skills Development

The CCB is based on the belief that practitioners, who through their collective struggles uncover solutions to the challenges of rebuilding communities, should have a vehicle for developing their knowledge and skills and sharing them with colleagues to improve practice in the field. This vehicle needs to be constructed around the realities of how practitioners work and what they need to make their practice more effective. This is best accomplished by creating a vehicle that is designed and directed by practitioners for practitioners.

Practitioners

We use the term “practitioner” to mean those people who occupy the “front line” positions of

community building. They include residents, youth, community-based organization staff, organizers, governance body members, service providers and public agency staff, who make up the workforce of community building practitioners. We will often use the phrase “residents and other practitioners” to emphasize the importance of resident voices, skills and wisdom as practitioners.

Impacting Communities of Color

In addition to placing practitioners at the center of the design and development, The CCB will focus particular attention on community building in neighborhoods of color. While poverty presents a common challenge for families in these neighborhoods, issues of race, language, and cultural diversity contribute to the complexity of this work. By explicitly incorporating a theory of change and a framework that address racism, inter-group relations, and other challenges of working in communities of color, the CCB will inform the work of efforts in similar communities.

IV. THE NEED FOR A PRACTITIONER-DRIVEN CENTER

Residents and other practitioners possess a wealth of knowledge about how to do effective work. This knowledge base has the benefit of being “field-tested,” refined and improved upon through years of experience. Practitioners have a pressing need for better methods of mining lessons from their work and vehicles for sharing these lessons and applying them more effectively. While considerable informal exchange occurs, practitioners continue to find it difficult to serve as sustained sources of support to each other. Given their time constraints and the absence of support structures, few opportunities exist for practitioners to engage in the type of peer-to-peer technical assistance that would greatly benefit their work. The CCB seeks to create these opportunities by establishing a formal network and structure to promote the development and exchange of knowledge and provision of technical assistance among

residents and other practitioners, and provide resources to carry their work forward.

V. CORE STRATEGIES

The work of the RCI practitioners has influenced their decision to develop the CCB around three core strategies that they believe undergird successful community building and neighborhood improvement. They are:

- Resident engagement and leadership development;
- Social systems development; and
- Physical and economic development.

Central to the CCB approach, however, is the necessity to combine and balance the three core strategies to reflect community need.

Resident Engagement and Leadership Development

Resident leadership is the ultimate level of resident participation and engagement. It entails the acquisition of skills that encompass capacity building, organizing, planning, decision-making and leadership—all aimed at empowering residents to make individual decisions affecting personal and family conditions and collective decisions affecting civic, economic and political life.

Resident engagement and leadership development include creating structures and programs that build individual and organizational capacity, promote resident organizing and leadership development, establish inclusive governance structures for resident decision-making and support the community in creating a vision and comprehensive development plan.

Social Systems Development

Social systems development involves an intricate weaving and re-weaving of the informal networks of supports and formal systems of services that provide residents—especially children, families and elders—with the basic services, programs and opportunities

they need to develop themselves, their families, their neighborhood and beyond.

Developing effective social systems to rebuild communities includes elements of policy and systems change, organizational development, relationship building and human development. Identifying needs, coordinating the delivery of public services and developing networks of formal and informal supports for children, youth, families and mature adults provides a foundation for rebuilding communities.

Physical and Economic Development

Physical and economic development means rebuilding and revitalizing the neighborhoods to improve the quality of life. Physical development follows the community's comprehensive plan that reflects its vision and values for the physical environment. It includes improving housing stock, retail and commercial areas, schools, parks and public infrastructure. It involves concentrated efforts to achieve the physical improvements through methods that create business and employment opportunities for residents in the rebuilding process and in the rebuilt neighborhood.

Physical and economic development include affordable, mixed income housing, physical infrastructure development, workforce development and the creation of an economic environment conducive to business opportunities that lead to employment. However, for physical and economic development to be community building strategies, they must include a commitment to creating housing, business and employment opportunities for neighborhood residents and businesses owned by people of color. The challenge of physical and economic development is to ensure that the revitalized neighborhood remains within the economic reach of long-term residents. This means that economic development strategies must be geared to creating employment and business opportunities for these residents.

Combining and Balancing Core Strategies

Each of the core strategies entails a complex set of activities and challenges. Community building initiatives have tended to emphasize one of these strategies. However, what the RCI experience contributes to the knowledge of the field is an understanding that each of these strategies must be present to create sustainable change. Moreover, they must be applied in a balance that reflects the conditions of the neighborhood and the needs and capacities of residents and practitioners.

Community development efforts have long recognized the importance of resident engagement and leadership, social development and physical and economic development to creating vibrant, healthy communities. Efforts to realize community change goals focused on each of the strategies have realized some improvements in outcomes for families and conditions in neighborhoods. However, what the founders of CCB have learned from the RCI experience is the necessity of integrating and balancing these core strategies based on psychological and physical needs of residents in order to create sustainable change in low-income neighborhoods.

VI. MISSION, GOALS AND OUTCOMES

Mission

The mission of the CCB is to improve outcomes for residents of low-income communities of color by strengthening the capacities of practitioners and their organizations and elevating their voices and influence in the community building field.

Method

The CCB will accomplish this mission through the active involvement of practitioners in designing and directing the CCB and its Institutes where they can develop capacities to: create information and tools to support their work; engage in peer training and technical assistance; and sustain and finance community building initiatives.

Goals

For Communities

- Increase the skills and capacities of residents and community-based organizations to engage in effective community building.

For Practitioners

- Increase the number of practitioners engaged in developing, providing and using peer tools, training and technical assistance

For the Field

- Increase the participation of practitioners in advocacy to influence private/public policies of institutions, government and foundations that support community building

Outcomes

For Communities

- Improved neighborhood conditions, services and outcomes for children, families and residents in low-income communities in the areas of :
 - Health
 - Safety
 - Housing
 - Education
 - Economic opportunity
 - Transportation
 - Environment
 - Physical infrastructure

For Practitioners

- A national network of practitioners capable of providing peer assistance and support to each other and their communities in order to continually improve outcomes for children, families and residents.

For the Field

- A network of practitioners who contribute to knowledge and practice in the field and who provide leadership for expanding the

community building approach to low-income communities of color.

- A mechanism for identifying, training and supporting new practitioner leadership in the field.

VII. CCB DESCRIPTION

The CCB will create three practitioner institutes. This section describes the work of the Institutes and the support they will provide to practitioners and community building field.

THE TRAINING AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE INSTITUTE

The Training and Technical Assistance Institute is designed to address the needs of practitioners for high-quality professional development experiences, training and technical assistance.

Peer Technical Assistance Network

The Training and Technical Assistance Institute will develop and administer a Peer Technical Assistance Network to provide a structure through which practitioners with knowledge and skills about various aspects of community building can be identified, develop their capacities to provide technical assistance and connect to people needing the types of assistance for which the practitioners possess expertise.

Professional Development Training and Conferences

The Training and Technical Assistance Institute will develop, offer and refer practitioners to training, conferences, and other professional development experiences tailored to the needs of new and seasoned practitioners. The initial development of curricula, training and conference topics will focus on community building principles and practices related to the three core strategy areas. The training and conferences will be designed for delivery to stakeholders on a neighborhood, regional and national basis.

Community Building Assessment Teams

One of the services that the Training and Technical Assistance Institute will offer is a peer community building assessment process to provide external, objective assessments of local community building efforts. Equipped with effective assessment tools and methods (to be designed by the CCB), the Assessment Teams will conduct field assessments that examine community building practices and program strategies, and provide recommendations for improving the functioning and outcomes of initiatives.

FINANCING AND SUSTAINABILITY INSTITUTE

One of the greatest challenges facing community building efforts is sustainability. The CCB will develop and operate a Financing and Sustainability Institute to provide technical assistance on sustainability and resource development, advocate for increased and stable funding for community building and, ultimately, acquire and distribute funds to community building efforts.

Technical Assistance and Training on Sustainability and Resource Development

The Financing Institute will offer a range of technical assistance and training related to sustainability and resource development including assessment, plan development, marketing and communications, source identification, grant writing and direct fund raising.

Community Building Resource Development Directory

The Financing Institute will develop and maintain a community building resource development directory focusing on financing options for the typical areas of community building and hard to cover costs like community organizing, lead agency operating expenses and resource development. The Institute also will work to identify creative financing strategies for community building efforts.

Development of and Advocacy for Community Building Financing Strategies

The Financing Institute will engage in research and design of innovative funding approaches for financing community building efforts and will use the strategies in its training and technical assistance, in public information and education campaigns and in its advocacy with policy makers for support of these strategies.

Fund Acquisition and Distribution

The Financing Institute proposes to establish itself to operate as a practitioner created and guided financing intermediary for the community building field. The Institute will work with funders—including governmental agencies, the philanthropic community and businesses—to develop a pool of resources that can be used to finance community building efforts. When the Institute makes grants the recipient will enter an agreement regarding the development and implementation of a sustainability and resource development plan.

PRACTICE TOOLS INSTITUTE

Critical to improved practice is the creation of tools and program models that support the work of practitioners and the conversion of effective practice into policy. The Practice Tools Institute is designed to provide practitioners and the field with information focused on a number of important issues related to practice: 1) tools and program models; 2) policies; 3) research and evaluation; 4) technology; and 5) organizational development.

One important activity area for the Practice Tools Institute will be the development of program models and tools for community building practitioners designed by practitioners.

Effective Practices and Programs

Through the involvement and advice of practitioners, the Institute will develop methods and formats for communicating information on effective practices and programs in ways that are conducive to the use of the information by practitioners. The Institute's work here involves two important elements. First is

developing methods for assessment and identification of effective practices. Second is documenting and disseminating effective practices in forms and through methods that increase their use.

Tools for Community Building

The initial focus of the tools for community building will be concentrated on the three core strategies. The Institute will convene design and development teams of practitioners—supported by writers, materials design specialists and other experts—to develop practitioner tools in each of the core areas. The design work accomplished through this process will serve as a foundation for other work of the Institute, including the effective programs and practices work and the community building assessment process.

Informing Policy and the Field

The models and tools identified and developed through the Institute will be disseminated widely and will be used in CCB training, conferences and the peer consultant network as well as in other community building practitioner venues. These dissemination activities are one method through which the Institute will inform the broader community development and public policy fields about the importance and potential of a community building approach to neighborhood development.

Policies for Community Building

Through an annual policy assessment and training process, the Institute will survey practitioners concerning critical federal, state and local policy issues they face in their work. Based on the identified priorities, the Institute will research effective policy approaches, identify places where the policies have been implemented, and develop strategies for advocating for local policy changes. The policy analysis work will culminate in an annual convening on policy priorities for community building that focuses on strategies for policy change.

Research and Evaluation

The Practice Tools Institute will work with practitioners, researchers and funders to develop tools and models for community participatory research and evaluation. Using these tools, the Training and Technical Assistance Institute will offer training and technical assistance in research and evaluation. The Practice Tools Institute’s “Research and Evaluation Program” will provide technical assistance and training to practitioners on methods of participatory community research and evaluation.

Technology

The Practice Tools Institute will focus on technology in two ways. First, the Institute will collect, develop and disseminate models for use of technology in community building. Second, the Institute will use technology as a tool for connecting practitioners to each other and to the programs and tools available through the three Institutes operated by the CCB.

Organizational Development

In many of the neighborhoods engaged in community building there are community-based organizations that support the work of residents and other practitioners. At the same time, a new organizational form has emerged—the collaboration—to bring together multiple organizations and stakeholders to work together jointly in the community building effort. The Institute will offer tools and assistance tailored to the unique organizational development needs of community building organizations.

VIII. GOVERNANCE AND ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

In early 2001, each of the five founding organizations made a commitment to forge a

national organization and to fund the costs associated with the planning phase. They established an eighteen-month planning period (March 2001–September 2002) for purposes of designing the CCB and developing relationships with other organizations and practitioners. A chart of the structure for the CCB is presented on the following page.

Policy Committee

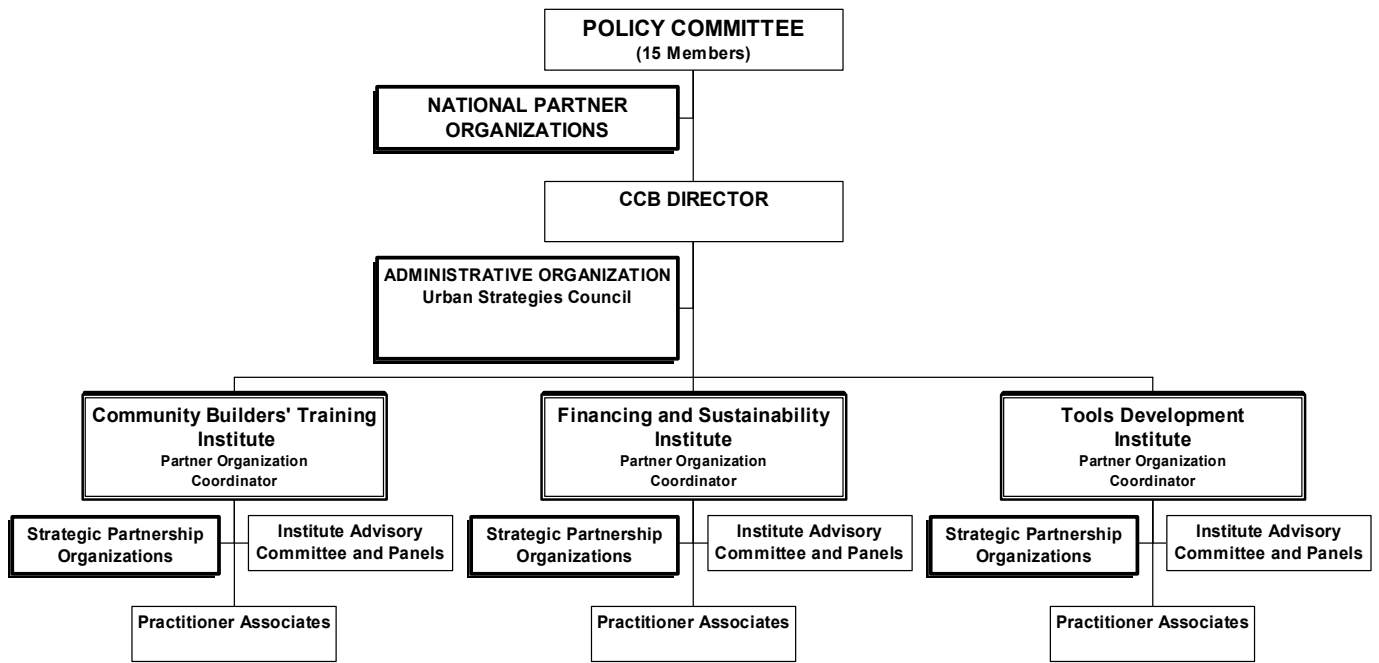
During planning and the initial implementation phase, the CCB is being governed by a Policy Committee consisting of fifteen (15) members. Each of the founding organizations has selected three members to serve on the Policy Committee, including:

1. Two resident representatives from each partner organization; and
2. One senior staff member from each partner organization

Although each of the organizations has three representatives on the Policy Committee, each organization has only one vote in decision-making matters related to the design and planning of the CCB.

IX. PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS

The founding organizations for the CCB recognize that a number of national organizations currently provide a variety of useful resources and supports for practitioners. Consistent with principles of community building, the CCB founders are seeking partnerships with selected organizations to achieve the goal of establishing a practitioner-directed system of coordinated and integrated technical assistance and support. The CCB seeks to establish four levels of partnerships with other community building organizations, including:



1. National Partnership with national membership organizations to provide input to the work of the CCB and to connect their membership to its services.
2. An Administrative Partnership to provide the administrative and program supports for the CCB and coordinate the work of its three Institutes.

Three Institute Partnerships to coordinate the design and implementation of the Institutes.

3. Strategic Partnerships with a variety of organizations to undertake specific projects and services for the CCB and its three Institutes.

X. PRACTITIONER ROLES

A driving concept behind the creation of the CCB is that practitioners play significant roles in its development, implementation and operation. These roles include governance of the CCB as well as creating knowledge and tools, offering training and technical assistance and providing leadership in the community building field.

Decision Making: Governance and Advisory Bodies

One important area for practitioner involvement is in the CCB's governance and

advisory bodies. The Policy Committee is developing a process for inviting at least two other practitioners to join as members with attention to increasing the diversity of program expertise, ethnicity and geographic representation. The governance structure also will include Institute Advisory Committees and projects advisory panels that help to develop the projects and provide input to and evaluation of the work.

Peer Assistance: Tools Development and Service Delivery

Practitioners will have a variety of methods for involvement in the program and services of the CCB as designers of programs and materials, and providers of peer services. Practitioners will be designated as associates to recognize those with an ongoing relationship with the CCB. Practitioners will receive compensation for work they perform as associates.

Membership: Using Information and Services

The broadest method of practitioner involvement in the CCB will be through using the information, programs and services that the CCB offers. We are exploring the creation of a membership arrangement through which practitioners would become eligible for selected information and services at free or discounted rates. The Policy Committee's decision on the CCB's membership structure

and benefits will be made in light of the selection of the National Partner organizations and their membership structures.

XI. FUNDING PARTNERS

The CCB seeks to establish both program and funding relationships with foundations and other funders. In terms of program relationships, the CCB will invite foundation and other funder staff to participate in advisory groups and design panels and as associates. Regarding funding relationships, the CCB will seek a variety of funding relationships including grants, contracts and fee for services.

Program Relationships

The CCB will provide a rich environment for learning that can offer substantial benefits to staff of foundations and other funders. At the same time, staff members of foundations and other funders have considerable knowledge and expertise that they can offer to practitioners and the field. The CCB intends to establish an environment through which foundation and other funder staff can work with practitioners to both contribute and learn.

Funding Relationships

Securing the necessary resources for the CCB will require developing relationships and partnerships with a variety of sources of funding. During the latter stages of the planning phase, the Policy Committee will be making contact with funders to present the concept of the CCB, obtain their input on its focus and design, and seek resources for implementation. In addition to obtaining grants (general operating, research and development and project), the CCB will also explore methods of financing that include contracts, fee for services for training, conferences, assessments, technical assistance and sale of materials.

XII. ACTIVITIES FOR PHASE 1 IMPLEMENTATION

The CCB will use a two-phase approach to implementation with each phase lasting for two

years. During Phase 1 implementation, we will focus on 1) developing organizational infrastructure; 2) launching the Institutes' signature projects; 3) resource development; and 4) Phase 2 implementation planning. In this section, we outline our concept of how we will develop the CCB and the Institutes over the next two years.

Phase 1 Implementation (October 2002-September 2004)

The first phase of implementation will occur during the two-year period between October 1, 2002 and September 30, 2004.

Developing Infrastructure

Our approach to infrastructure implementation is to begin with the development of core staffing and the governance structure, recruitment of practitioner members, the development of partnerships (including the National and Institute partnerships) and marketing of the CCB.

Institute Development

The focus of the Institutes during the first and second years of operations will be on implementing a signature project and developing operating procedures and longer-term work plans. In addition to specific projects outlined below, the Institutes will scan the field for needs and opportunities consistent with its goals and, contingent on funding, may engage in other projects during Phase 1 implementation.

Training and Technical Assistance Institute

The signature project for the Training and Technical Assistance Institute will be a **Community Builders' Training Program** focused on developing practitioners' knowledge and skills in community building and the three core strategies of the CCB—resident engagement and leadership, social systems development, and physical and economic development. We envision the development of a three to five day training experience designed and delivered by the

founding organizations and other practitioners. During the first year, the Training and Technical Assistance Institute will work with partners and practitioners to further design and develop the **Peer Technical Assistance Network** for implementation during the second year of operation.

Financing and Sustainability Institute

The signature project for the Financing Institute will be the development of the **Community Building Resource Development Directory**. During the first year, we anticipate completing the pilot version of the directory, initial piloting of it with practitioners, and final modifications for publication (hard copy and online). During the first year of implementation, the Financing Institute will begin the design and development work on its **Resource Development and Sustainability Training Program** in anticipation of offering the first training sessions during the second year of operations.

Practice Tools Institute

The signature projects for the Practice Tools Institute will focus on the curriculum and materials for **Community Builders' Training**. In addition to developing the curriculum for the training, the Institute will also focus on identification and development of program models for each of the three core strategies of the CCB. During the second year, the Institute will focus on design of the **Resource Development and Sustainability Training** curriculum and materials the Financing Institute will offer during its second year of operation.

Resource Development

Resource development will constitute an ongoing activity of the CCB. During the first two years of implementation, the focus will be on securing the funds for core operations and signature projects, and developing a sustainability plan for the CCB. During this period, the CCB will also develop specific plans for revenue generating activities,

including fee for services and sale of materials to augment grants and contracts.

Phase 2 Implementation Planning (October 2004–September 2006)

During the first two years of operation, the Policy Committee and its stakeholders will continue to engage in planning for Phase 2 implementation (October 1, 2004–September 30, 2006) and long-term planning based on the experience of the CCB during its first two years of operations. Given the matters that will be decided (i.e., governance structure, partnerships, practitioner involvement, signature project launches and resource development), and possible changes in the environment for community building, the Policy Committee will be in a better position to adjust plans for the next phase of implementation and set forth a long-term plan.

POLICY COMMITTEE

Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative, Boston—John Barros, Keila Barros, Elizabeth Centeio (and May Louie, alternate)
Warren Conner Development Corporation, Detroit—Maggie DeSantis, Willie Mae Gaskin and Angela Wilson
NEWSSED CDC, Denver—Veronica Barela, Carlos Guerra and Jose Silva
Germantown Settlement House, Philadelphia—Emanuel Freeman, Gwenn Mitchell and Angela Taylor
Marshall Heights Community Development Corporation, Washington, D.C.—Loretta Tate, Charles Cotten and Aretha Frizzell

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

CONTACT:

Junious Williams at (510) 893-2404 or email: info@CenterCB.org