

**Administrative Resources and Supports for  
Grassroots Youth Programs: The Challenges  
to Providers and Ideas for Targeted Support**

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## INTRODUCTION

Managing the administrative side of social service organizations is full of complexities and challenges, regardless of the size and scope of the organization. The typically limited administrative capacity of small programs only intensifies the pressure of managing the "business" aspect of the service. Add to this the particular pressures of serving youth as a primary population, and the administrative demands on small grassroots agencies serving children become almost overwhelming.

In an effort to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the administrative dilemmas facing these organizations, Chapin Hall has begun exploratory research in this area. Our study sought first to investigate and define the primary administrative challenges faced by grassroots agencies serving children. The second purpose of the study was to assess what possible administrative resources are available and currently utilized by these same agencies. Third, we hoped to uncover the obstacles that prevent small agencies from using these resources. Finally, we used this opportunity to probe those in the field about new ideas and strategies for supporting grassroots programs.

It is important to remember that the process of examining the administrative needs of grassroots organizations is not synonymous with helping the organizations grow. Many programs examined for this study are effective precisely because--at their current size--they fill a niche in the community that larger agencies cannot. Many agencies have made a conscious decision to stay small and focus on the community they currently serve, although most would like to reach more youth. These smaller programs are to be valued for the youth they reach and the depth of difference they can make in a child's life. With this in mind, it is all the more important that the creation of administrative support for these programs be informed by the challenges and needs

that the staff themselves articulate. By successfully building their administrative capacities, these small organizations can then turn their attention to the quality and range of programs they offer.

## METHODOLOGY

For this study, we conducted twenty-six interviews with the administrators of grassroots primary support agencies. (See Appendix A for a list of participating agencies). The programs included those that foster healthy youth development through arts, sports, educational assistance, leadership training, and play spaces throughout Chicago. In addition to these individual programs, the study includes data from interviews with staff at several networks and collaborations of primary support programs.

Twenty of the twenty-six programs had annual budgets of \$500,000 or lower. Of these, nine had annual budgets ranging from \$8,000-\$99,000, five had budgets in the \$100,000-\$299,000 range, and six had an annual budget of between \$300,000 and \$500,000. Staff at most of the smaller agencies consisted of two to five full-time employees. Finally, it should be noted that of the twenty-six agencies, nine are current grantees in the Chicago Community Trust's Children Youth and Families Initiative.

The average interview lasted approximately one hour and was conducted at the site of the program. Two interview protocols, one for programs and one for networks of programs, were developed to assist in guiding the conversations. (See Appendices B and C.) Aside from the tensions and challenges described by the interviewees, the process of scheduling and conducting the interviews was an indication of the need for administrative support in grassroots programs. Attempting to establish a meeting time was often a testament to the executive director's need for administrative support; it took several tries to reach directors over the phone, and twice interviewees failed to show up at the appointed time.

Most small programs devote very little space to their administrative function. Thus, most "offices" in which the interviews were conducted were part of a common space and subject to a variety of interruptions and distractions. Although few administrators addressed these factors

directly in their interviews, the need for additional space and scheduling help underscore the challenges mentioned during the conversations.

## FINDINGS

Three issues surfaced through the interviews. First, the directors of most small programs feel that the benefits of investing in administrative supports do not outweigh the costs. In other words, they would rather see dollars put into programs that directly impact youth. Second, all service providers interviewed in this study felt that the time and resources devoted to fundraising represent their biggest administrative burden. Finally, the majority of interviewees are uncomfortable with the "business" part of their job. Having primarily volunteer or direct-service backgrounds, most executive directors simply feel unprepared for their administrative roles.

In addition to these findings, a larger theme ran throughout the interviews. In grassroots organizations, the program and administrative parts of the organization are entirely intertwined in terms of staff, space, and resources. As a result, there is a constant tension between program and service priorities on the one hand, and administrative functions on the other. For example, the decision of whether or not to invest in a photocopier presents an executive director of a grassroots program with a series of questions: Where can the copier be put so that its noise and size will not detract from youth programming? Which staff are not too busy with the children to do the copying? What other youth in the community could be served with the funds used to buy the copier?

This paper explores this conflict for grassroots programs. The first section attempts to "unpack" the tension by explicating the areas presenting the greatest administrative challenges for executive directors. In the second section, we approach the conflict from a different angle by looking at the resources that executive directors are using to meet their administrative challenges. The third section focuses on the notion of collaboration as a means of addressing the tension. (Although collaborations are undoubtedly a sub-category of support, the topic was repeatedly raised by interviewees, and therefore seemed to merit a more detailed look.)

In the final section of the paper we present our conception of a resource network that might be designed to meet some of the administrative challenges articulated by executive directors. Although we recognize that the conflict between program and administrative needs cannot be eradicated for smaller organizations, we hope that this proposed model might be a way of easing administrative burdens, thereby benefiting direct service programs.

### **Program vs. Administration: The Primary Tension**

Although all nonprofits struggle to manage their administrative resources, this process plays out in a unique way for smaller agencies. The smaller the agency, the more likely it is that the program and administrative functions are inextricably linked. The practical explanation for this phenomenon is a shortage of staff and resources, with an underinvestment on the administrative side. The result, however, is a constant tension between the demands of delivering programs and the necessity of maintaining credible administrative practices. After-school program staff double as grant writers; executive directors take time from their schedules to pick kids up and bring them to programs. This lack of boundaries in both staff roles and fund allocation permeates the consciousness of the agency, manifesting itself in a sense of guilt for both the administrative and program staff. Many administrators, while realizing that it is necessary to build their administrative capacity, feel that any dollar spent on administrative costs is "stolen" from the kids. And program staff who are excelling in their jobs worry that they are failing to do their part to secure the necessary resources for upcoming programs. According to one executive director,

I have a real deep "administrative-make-do" bias...I have recently said...wouldn't it be neat to go out and buy \$10,000 worth of Pentium, new software that really works, and something as if we were a real institution. But the truth is that if I had \$10,000 to spare, I would hire a half-time worker for a year to hang out with the kids. I'm not sure that's not penny-wise and pound foolish.

What does this tension mean for small grassroots primary supports? Programs of all sizes are plagued by the challenges of funding, staffing, and governance. However, with the time consumed by programmatic concerns, administrators of small organizations rarely have extra time for staff training, board education, or fundraising research. Occasionally, efforts are made to bolster an exhausted and overworked administrative side. More often than not, however, guilt about neglecting programs and kids becomes the underlying rationale for failing to build that administrative side. Small organizations are reluctant to invest in administration at what they perceive to be the "cost" of their programs.

An understanding of this central tension will help to elucidate many of the decisions and actions of the administrators interviewed for this study, and may be helpful when attempting to formulate effective strategies for support.

## **FUNDING, STAFFING, AND GOVERNANCE: THE ADMINISTRATIVE CHALLENGES**

Small programs face a host of administrative challenges that come to bear directly on the quality of their programming. The following section looks at the three administrative areas most often cited as problematic. In each of the categories--funding, staffing, and governance--program directors identified a range of issues with which they struggle.

### **Funding: A Shortage of Information and Time**

The administrative challenge most often mentioned by interviewees was fundraising and issues directly related to funding. Whether publicly or privately funded, agencies struggle with the difficult task of supporting their programs financially. Responses given by interviewees when asked to explain this administrative challenge reflect the perceived enormity of their task.

Many small grassroots organizations do not even know where to begin to find out about funding opportunities. Churches, in particular, lack experience with outside funding sources. Discovering deadlines, funding requirements, extra public moneys, or potential funding sources requires research that administrators of small organizations cannot fit into their schedules. An executive director of an agency on the West Side noted that she could use help with, "bringing things together as far as getting information of the availability of resources. Either you don't get that information at all, or it's at a time that is so late."

Organizations who are new to the philanthropic world have difficulty locating this information. As many churches move to diversify their services to meet the needs of their communities, and not just their congregations, they must diversify their funding sources beyond congregational or denominational support. Christ Lutheran Church on the Northwest Side has converted an unused attic space into "the world's smallest gym" and offered after-school activities twice a week. According to Pastor Tom Terrell, twenty-five children regularly attend his

programs, only about seven or eight of whom had a prior affiliation with the church. This increased attendance has prompted Terrell to begin to look outside the congregation for additional funding, a process which has not been easy. One of his first successful attempts has been to secure \$1,000 from the Department of Human Services, and he is certain that similar funding opportunities exist. One source of information about private dollars is the *Foundation Directory* published by the Foundation Center which currently retails at \$479.50 for the complete set, a prohibitive cost for many smaller programs.

Small primary supports also suffer from a lack of funding history, which they feel deters large foundations from investing in their programs. This problem has challenged Adrienne Bartow at the Greater Lawn Community Youth Network, a three-year-old agency that is competing with other similar, yet older organizations. "One of our main concerns is the future of funding because we are new and we are young, and we feel like it is very difficult to compete with organizations who have been in existence much longer and who have the reputation and credibility." Bartow's program, which provides summer and after-school programs to children in the community through a network of community resources, has begun to supplement its grant income by charging small fees to program participants.

Other small programs feel that they are not sufficiently networked in the funding world to make successful grant requests. Phillip Bleicher is executive director of the National Student Alliance. At age twenty-four, he is the oldest of his staff members working with a board of directors that is comprised of both young professionals and high school students. The relatively young age of those administering the program has made it difficult for National Student Alliance to form funding relationships. "We don't have the big funders like MacArthur or Joyce and we've tried many times but it's always been--well, it's the who you know and we don't know many people."

More than a lack of networking or information, however, agency administrators feel a lack of time. John Hike, executive director of a sports program in the Grand Boulevard area, has participated in a few fundraising seminars, but states, "I'm a program person. I run programs. I've got some skills in writing proposals for funding and that kind of stuff, but running seven sports a year doesn't leave you much time to put a proposal together."

Bruce Ray of the Christian Care Center commented, "It's out there and you apply and you apply and then you get nothing and it is sort of like, why bother? Why bother even putting all this energy into things. And whenever you are a small program who has a director who is also a direct service provider, then how much time can you reasonably expect that person to give for proposal writing and fundraising?"

Using emotional words like "worry" and "guilt," respondents expressed frustration at their own time limitations. A long time director of a youth-service agency in Evanston, Don Baker has recently decided to hire a part-time resource development person.

It was constant guilt. The more fundraising I did, the less time I had to work with staff and be focused on program development, staff supervision, program quality issues--the things that are really important. And then when I did focus on those, we wouldn't raise the money. No matter what I did, I felt wrong. And it was incredibly frustrating.

Unfortunately, tension over this issue does not confine itself to the administrative arena. A program staff member of an open gym in Logan Square made the following observation, "Sisters Nancy, Carmen, Maria over at ALSO are working on grants. They are also trying to get funds to get someone to do the grant writing. It's hard for them because they have so many other things they have to worry about. Carmen has to worry about the board meetings, she has to worry about the staff meetings..."

The burden of fundraising can be felt throughout the organization reaching those working directly with youth. This burden is heightened when agencies in the same community find themselves competing for the same dollars. Hike of the Sports Affinity Task Force notes that,

everybody in a black community such as this, all these agencies, all of them are a lot of times fighting for the same money. And so sometimes it's difficult for them to go into cahoots with another agency because again they are fighting for the same dollars from the same funders. And most of the time they are independent. They are out there on their own.

This same challenge was mentioned by Mary Tate, the Director of Black on Black Love, a program operating out of the Robert Taylor Homes. When asked about the administrative challenges for her program, she responded that there was only a limited pool of funds for programs operating in her area. The uncertainty of funds, she claimed, made it difficult for her to plan programs or implement changes in her agency. Tate's perspective on the competition for funds in her neighborhood was seconded by staff from a CHA-affiliated technical assistance program who stated that many of their public housing based clientele felt a sense of competition, rather than cooperation, from surrounding organizations.

Organizations have taken purposeful steps to meet the challenge of local competition for limited funds. ALSO, the Alliance of Logan Square Organizations, is a network consisting of seven community agencies on the city's near northwest side. As a network, ALSO provides a number of services to its member agencies, including fundraising assistance. When asked about the potential for conflict or competition between agencies ALSO's executive director replied,

I get information on funding sources from some of my very own member organizations. My first question to them is, "Are you concerned that we are going to compete?" I would venture to say that somewhere down the line there is the sense that we're competing for dollars. But I think we talk about it.

The sense of openness and sharing cultivated by ALSO is appreciated by its member agencies. One program director noted, "ALSO is very good about spreading the money throughout each agency. Carmen is real good about that and she doesn't hold back anything from us." This sort of communication helps to alleviate some of the administrative burden of fundraising.

Once an agency has received funds, it is likely that there will be administrative follow-up related to the grant. This follow-up is particularly time consuming for organizations receiving government funding. The Northwest Youth Organization (NYO) is an agency that has expanded and transformed with the help of government funds. Once a primary support agency focused on outreach to kids who were outside the realm of intervention programs, NYO is now a much larger agency providing substance abuse, foster care, and other services to children already entrenched in government systems. The change and growth of the agency has largely been a product of contractual relationships with the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services and Human Services, but these relationships have "increased our administrative burden astronomically." Functioning before with a small staff, NYO now has an entire administrative department to handle the increased load.

NYO is a drastic example of the administrative outgrowth resulting from government funding, but many grassroots primary supports programs struggle with this problem. After developing his program's relationship with the Department of Human Services, Pastor Terrell of Christ Lutheran Church decided to utilize their free lunch program. The administrative follow-up, which involved accounting for 98 percent of the food used, was so extensive that Terrell has decided not to use the program a second time.

A1 Carter, the director of youth sports programs in Cabrini Green, observed,

The Chicago Housing Authority gives us money on a performance basis, meaning that I have to go out and perform and then send in those invoices to be reimbursed, and I don't particularly like that, I mean, because I work my butt off and then to get scrutinized because my i's are not dotted and my t's are not crossed, and I don't have the staff persons to stay here to do that. So I have to do that, and by me doing that keeps me away from other things that I need to be doing.

Although it is not a funding issue, public licensing and credentialing are likely to increase the administrative responsibilities of an organization. Staff at Family Matters, a small agency in the Rogers Park neighborhood, spend a great deal of time preparing for quarterly inspections to maintain their state licensure. Bruce Ray at the Christian Care Center has let his licensing lapse. "What we found was that it was not a big selling point for families. And so there were inspections, we had to make sure the snack we provided was according to the nutritional guidelines, all those kinds of things...if it is not a high value to the community, then why bother with it."

### **Staffing: Getting by on Too Little**

Reluctance to invest in administrative functions goes beyond issues of acquiring funding and meeting funders' expectations. Small agencies often wait until their administrative situation becomes unbearable before hiring extra staff. One example of this sort of crisis-based decision can be seen in the Free Street Theater Company. A small struggling theater company, Free Street had accumulated a deficit during its second decade in existence. At this point, Artistic Director David Schein resigned his role as Artistic Director and became the company's executive director, managing the business side of Free Street. "I became the executive director because I wanted to support the programs I had started...it had to happen or else we would have just sunk, and that's why I'm not the artistic director anymore. I had to do it if I was going to stay here." Following Schein's change in position, Free Street has eradicated its debts and is now operating with a surplus.

Lacking a fiscal crisis, many executive directors are unable to perceive and respond to administrative needs in such an immediate way. One executive director was shocked to discover during an agency staff retreat that program staff all agreed on the need to hire an administrative assistant. "The suggestion came from the two program supervisors...what they said was as much as we would like to have more program staff, the truth is that if we have the money, the next new staff position MUST be a secretary or assistant for you. I was astonished by that." Another common challenge faced by agency administrators is the high turnover of staff in both programmatic and administrative positions. Although the reasons for turnover vary from agency to agency, the two primary reasons for staff turnover in small agencies seem to be a lack of career path and uncertainty about salary or benefits. The founder and current executive director of an Englewood-based program recently received a letter from the Department of Human Services informing him of budget cuts affecting his agency in the upcoming fiscal year. Upon receiving the letter, he made the following observation,

If I share this with my staff, which I am going to have to do with them, it's kind of like saying if you get an opportunity for a job in Corporate America, maybe you should take it because I don't know what I can guarantee you next year. I mean it is scary having to live year by year when you have a family, you have bills, you are thinking about buying a new home, you are thinking about education for your kids.

Managers and administrators of small social service agencies are aware of the need to provide better salary and benefit packages to their staff. Last year, Free Street Theater's board made the unprecedented step of voting to provide benefits to staff. Providing these sort of incentives for staff is not only helpful to the staff members, but assures agency directors peace of mind. Carolyn Blunt of Bridges Community Institute uses volunteer labor in place of any paid staff because programming costs deplete the entire budget. Blunt would like to be able to provide salaries for full-time workers in order to ensure a high quality of work. "I'd love to hire

staff...when you have someone paid, then you have someone to say 'well okay, this is your job.' And when you don't have anyone paid, you can't."

Unable to provide benefits and salaries that are competitive with larger agencies, many small agencies struggle to find qualified staff for both the program and administrative functions. Rev. Ray of the Christian Care Center has learned that investment in highly trained staff saves the program time and money. "One of the things we have looked for is somebody that has a teaching background. We just got our assistant director...and she was excellent because she knew how to deal with kids, she knew how to deal with classroom management. She knew how to be creative and flexible...we're not just looking for people who have child care experience or who are good with kids because you can like kids and not know how to organize a group. So we find that people with education backgrounds are the best." This idea was seconded by the staff at Family Matters who have had difficulty finding staff that are able to develop creative curriculums.

A major challenge for many agencies has been finding someone with computer knowledge. As Merit Music program has grown to become a large organization, they have simultaneously worked to upgrade their in-house technology. Merit now, however, faces the problem of staffing the technological change. As director Duffie Adelson explains, "Here you have this wonderful equipment, okay, and nobody to support you. We keep trying to find people, but nobody is really interested in servicing a \$1.6 million operation when they could go work for IBM. The experts in the field of computer support are pulled in by the real giants, and those of us who are sort of middling level are kind of left."

North Lawndale's SAFE program has also expressed a need for staff with knowledge of computers. SAFE's commitment of hiring from within their community has made this a difficult goal because most community members have not had access to this type of technological training.

To add to this difficulty, small grassroots programs rarely have the capacity for intensive staff supervision or training. Few interviewees felt they were able to spend enough time on staff supervision, and fewer still were able to offer training to existing staff. The exception were those agencies actively participating in the ALSO network. Drawing on the resources of larger agencies in the network, ALSO is able to offer staff training to its smaller participants.

Finally, although no interviewee expressed this concern directly, there appears to be a lack of role clarity among staff in grassroots agencies. As noted earlier, program staff are often expected to handle administrative overflow. Marshall Lacour of St. Sylvester's after-school program discussed this problem, "It [administrative duties] takes away from some of the kids' time. Like just tonight, I have to go to a network meeting at 6:00 so I have to close the gym a little early, and the kids get very disappointed."

Similarly, Ms. Harris, the Program Director at SAFE has seen an increase in her administrative duties since coming on as paid program staff. "I'm here from seven in the morning to six at night. Most of the morning now is spent chasing down dollars and working on administrative work to make sure dollars are being used appropriately." Ms. Harris still maintains a full schedule as Director of both the after school and summer programs at SAFE.

### **Governance: A Need for Board Development**

Agency governance and its connection to administrative work was seen as a primary administrative challenge to many interviewees. When asked to describe this challenge, most executive directors cited a need for "board development." Upon further exploration, however, it became apparent that the notion of board development has different meanings for different agencies.

For many grassroots organizations, the need for board development is an articulation of the need to educate existing board members about their roles and responsibilities. Lacking this

knowledge can have dire consequences for the organization. One executive director described an administrative crisis in his agency that occurred because the board was unsure about their role in holding the previous executive director accountable for gross mismanagement of agency funds.

If there's anybody to blame, it's the board. They allowed him [the executive director] to go months, meeting after meeting, without producing any financial statements...They were all lay people, so he just made everything sound great...He would always say, "well, I just had a meeting with a huge funder and it is going to be the answer to all our problems." And all the board members were afraid to challenge that...so he led them on for a long time, but they needed to be accountable. I mean a lot of people, including myself, had said to the board chairperson that this is not right.

Other executive directors struggle with boards who are content to leave administrative decisions in the hands of staff. One board recently told its executive director that he should find some new board members to recruit. He responded, "I told them...I want you guys to go out and get them in...I want to build an organization that will last without me. I didn't want to be the board all on my own. I wanted the board to take ownership of the board and the organization." This director went on to say that as he continues to recruit future board members, he looks for those with some prior experience in governance.

Whereas many managers are concerned with educating their boards of directors, others are concerned with building the size of their board. Some small agencies are interested in building their boards from the fundraising perspective. Don Baker describes his board development strategy as,

The old saw of the three W's--work, wealth, and wisdom. You have the worker bees, the people with access, and the wisdom is people who either bring a particular skill or a particular perspective. The notion being that every board member have at least two of the three, and preferably all three. And finding a three-fer is always hard.

Another executive director agrees, saying, "I have a great board that really just comes to board meetings. They have to do more than that. I'm struggling right now financially because we don't fundraise."

Although several organizations see the need to increase their board size for fundraising purposes, many small organizations feel passionate about remaining representative of their service population. Leadership at SAFE, an organization with a thirteen-member board comprised of parents, parishioners, and community residents, observes that, "the success of SAFE is that it is based in the community. 50 percent of our board lives below poverty."

Similarly, Phillip Bleicher at National Student Alliance maintains a board that is half high school students and half adults from the community. Bleicher views this board configuration as central to their mission of increasing student representation on school boards. Although these goals are obviously mission oriented, they add to the administrative burden of the agency as the boards do not function as fundraising organizations or sources of management aid. Struggling to retain the voice of their community in organizational decisions, many small agencies feel a great tension between the appropriate role of their boards and the growth potential of their organizations.

## **SOURCES OF SUPPORT**

As organizations are struggling with these and other administrative challenges, many agencies have looked externally for resources to bolster their administrative capacities. These resources include the community in which the agency is located, other local nonprofits, and finally the larger nonprofit community. Each of these areas offers a variety of solutions to various administrative challenges.

### **Drawing on the Community: Volunteers and Local Institutions**

One of the primary resources garnered from the community is volunteers to fill what would otherwise be salaried programmatic and administrative staff positions. The Sports Affinity Task Force has paid small stipends to volunteers from the community to officiate at their tournaments. As Executive Director Hike explains, "We are again trying to find volunteers out of the community. Ones that don't have jobs that do have a liking for sports or played it at some point." Hike's volunteers attend a series of trainings before serving as program referees.

Aside from filling these unpaid roles, a volunteer pool can be an excellent source from which to draw paid staff. Both Mary Tate of Black on Black Love, and Ms. Harris at SAFE have moved into their role as program directors after serving for several years as parent volunteers in the programs. Having developed a prior knowledge of both the programs and children served, volunteers can more quickly move into effective work as staff, thereby eliminating administrative time spent on the learning curve.

Although volunteerism has been an answer for some small agencies, other grassroots programs have struggled with finding an adequate volunteer base within their community. John Hike is afraid that if he is unable to fund his volunteer stipends in the upcoming year, it will be difficult to recruit volunteers for his program. This sentiment was echoed by A1 Carter, who when asked about the use of volunteers in his program replied, "Volunteerism in the black

community is impossible. People want to get paid for working. We might get one or two, but that's it."

Aside from human capital, a number of administrative resources can be found in community institutions. Parks, schools, churches, and libraries provide space and staffing help to grassroots programs. David Schein operates Free Street Theater's administrative office from donated space in a Chicago Park District building. He explains, "We're institutionally partnered--I mean you have to partner now to survive." Al Carter's sports programs also use Park District space for games and tournaments.

Public and private schools in the community are a resource for several interviewees. Schools have donated both space and equipment for use by local groups. Lacour, who runs the open gym at St. Sylvester's, has developed a relationship with the local public school: "There's the Darwin School and I've seen them do one of the strangest things that I've never seen a public school do. They donated their sports equipment to us. When they gave us their sports equipment, I was shocked." The National Student Alliance uses school computers and volunteer student staff to design and maintain their web page.

The most common community resource used by small programs are the spaces available in local churches. Church buildings were home to seven of the twenty-six programs we surveyed, although most of these programs do not serve youth from the parish in which they are housed. The relationships between the church and the program vary in degrees of connection; some programs are created and funded by the congregations, and other programs simply use office space donated by the church. The more highly connected the program is to its home parish, the more likely it is that the church becomes a comprehensive administrative resource for the program, helping with marketing or bookkeeping. Tom Terrell of Christ Lutheran Church has built his program on the administrative resources from his church. He recently won acclaim from

an organization called Inspired Partnerships for turning unused attic space above a former sanctuary into a gym for a church-affiliated after-school program. The funds and resources for this renovation came from the church budget, and church administrative staff support the new program.

Other agencies look to libraries and universities as potential administrative resources. The Greater Lawn Youth Community Network has asked the West Lawn Library to join their network and assist with programs. Executive Director Bartow praises the library for having been an extraordinarily supportive member of the network, offering both space and staff resources. John Hike, whose program is located on the South Side, uses the University of Chicago for staff training.

### **Support From the Larger Nonprofit Community**

In addition to institutional and community support, the larger nonprofit community offers many resources that can aid small organizations with their administrative functions. Perhaps the most obvious example of this kind of resource is the Donor's Forum Library, which offers information on a variety of funding sources and other agency management issues. The Donor's Forum has been a particularly helpful resource for small programs that are just beginning to enter Chicago's philanthropic scene. Pastor Terrell and his program have benefited from the use of this organization, "My wife and I both went through this workshop downtown -- the Donor's Forum. The seminar was unbelievably helpful. I was just amazed at how effective the woman who was leading it was. Of course, for the most part it was not churches there, but it kind of helped us tune in." Aside from the direct service it provides, the Donor's Forum also offers small nonprofits an opportunity to network in the larger community, thereby encouraging both formal and informal relationships.

In answer to some of the governance challenges for small nonprofits, the National Center for Nonprofit Boards has offered all their educational publications at a reduced rate of 40 percent off to all organizations with a budget of under \$250,000. This program was funded through a grant to the NCNB who "wanted to pass the savings along to our customers." Offering information on everything from board development to agency mergers to hiring administrative staff, the NCNB's booklets are an important learning tool for growing agencies. Sales to smaller nonprofits have been extremely high since the onset of the reduced rate.

Participation in public or private initiatives can support the administrative function of small nonprofits both financially and through the associations that are developed. Participation in the YouthNet program allowed Bridges Community Institute to pay for staff and operate their programs from school facilities. Bridges, unhappy with a decline in the quality of programming, disaffiliated from YouthNet and has had difficulty recreating some of those prior relationships that helped ease the program's administrative burden. In order to foster similar relationships, the Chicago Community Trust's Children, Youth, and Family Initiative (CYFI) has worked to facilitate both administrative and programmatic relationships between agencies. As mentioned earlier, ALSO provides a great deal of administrative help to its member agencies. CYFI has also provided the opportunity for participants to attend Indiana University's Fundraising School in Indianapolis.

## UNTAPPED RESOURCES

Although the organizations interviewed for this study identify a variety of resources and supports that have been of help to them, there remains an equally large list of available services not currently being used by these programs. Organizations like CPAs for the Public Interest and the Nonprofit Financial Center provide free and low-cost bookkeeping and accounting services to nonprofits. The Executive Service Corps, a volunteer organization comprised of retired corporate executives, offers free management training and strategic planning services to nonprofits, and organizations like Lawyers for the Creative Arts lend legal advice on a variety of subjects to arts-related nonprofits.

Given that these services exist, it is helpful to inquire why they are not being utilized by the organizations interviewed for this report. The answer has three parts: time, awareness, and location. Returning to the central message of interviewees, a shortage of time prevents them from seeking out creative solutions to administrative challenges, despite the fact that personnel are often very innovative in programming. Moreover, the technical assistance organizations that exist do not appear to work to raise awareness of their services outside the normal channels of communication. Therefore, a grassroots program which is not already networked in the philanthropic or nonprofit community may not be aware of their services. Finally, the issue of location is worth considering. With the exception of two programs, all interviewees' programs were located outside the downtown Chicago Loop area. Interestingly, all the technical assistance programs and resources, including the Donor's Forum Library, are headquartered in the Loop. Thus, larger agencies with main offices in the Loop may be able to take advantage of these programs, but this may be more of an effort for grassroots organizations in neighborhoods outside the Loop.

## **COLLABORATION AND COOPERATIVE RELATIONSHIPS: THE COSTS AND BENEFITS**

Collaborations among local nonprofits have represented, and continue to represent, a popular source of administrative support; the range of ways in which local nonprofits have relied on one another to meet administrative challenges is very wide.

One focus of our research was to probe the potential of shared administrative resources among grassroots agencies, either begun through formal collaboration or circumstantial relationships. It is important to note that, although some programs were vocal in their opposition to funder-induced formal collaboration, most directors of small programs were open to the notion of working in conjunction with similar or neighboring agencies in order to build stronger infrastructure and thereby better serve the youth in their communities. Most hesitation came from administrators fearing that collaboration, even on the administrative side, might somehow change the essence of their particular program. In effect, grassroots program directors were asking for administrative supports that would not seek to change, grow, or transform the existing programs--resources that would support them as they are.

### **Models of Resource Sharing**

One popular mode of resource sharing has been the nonprofit network. Although networks vary in the way they serve their member agencies, it is not uncommon for them to provide administrative as well as programmatic assistance. ALSO, the Alliance of Latin Square Organizations, provides staff training for program staff at member agencies. In addition, ALSO has served as the development office for member agencies, dispersing the funds from the Chicago Community Trust's Children, Youth, and Family Initiative, and helping programs to begin to develop alternative funding sources.

Not all networks, however, provide such a comprehensive administrative package. The After School Action Program (ASAP) in the Uptown/Edgewater neighborhood does not provide staff training or fundraising assistance for programs involved in the network. John Schmidt, executive director, describes ASAP's role as, "a value-added to whatever an organization is doing, never a replacement or a doing something for an organization. It's always value-added." With the exception of offering volunteer coordination services, the focus of ASAP's work is to enhance the programming at member organizations rather than the administrative function.

Many smaller organizations have entered contractual relationships with other larger nonprofits in the community. Perhaps the most typical relationship of this sort is the fiscal agent relationship. In this situation, a small agency which has not incorporated as a 501(c)(3) contracts with a larger agency to have them serve as the funnel through which funding can be directed. Although the primary benefit of this relationship is to secure funding for smaller programs which otherwise would not have access to donations from foundations, programs with fiscal agents recognize other benefits as well. The Sports Affinity Task Force is a smaller program that is also part of the Chicago Community Trust's Children, Youth, and Families Initiative. Hike, director of the program, describes the relationship in glowing terms, "We get our benefits packages through the YMCA. Since they are our fiscal agent, they provide benefits ...the Trust pays them to do that and handle the administrative part of it. And we just fall right in with their benefit packages as full-time workers. That's one of the benefits of being involved with the Washington Park YMCA." Eve Guttman of Windows of Opportunity, a CHA-affiliated program that serves as a fiscal agent for public housing based organizations, is another proponent of the fiscal agent relationship. She has noted that, aside from serving in the fiscal agent role, Windows has been able to provide technical assistance to nurture growing programs.

Whereas the fiscal-agent relationship is a contractual relationship, many small nonprofits have sought out similar, yet less formal, relationships with larger agencies. One example of these creative collaborations can be seen in the Merit Music Program's innovative approach to solving its bookkeeping needs. Merit has begun offering music lessons to youth at the Chicago Youth Centers free of charge in exchange for the use of CYC's bookkeeper to do Merit's accounting. According to Adelson, the exchange has been a great help.

It's really a great thing for us because [CYC] is a much larger organization with a budget many times our size, and a whole accounting department. And this gal who is in charge, who is the CFO for them, her level of expertise we could never afford on our own as an organization.

Several small theater organizations have undertaken these informal relationships to alleviate some of their administrative costs. The Illustrated Theater Company has offered free performances to schools and community centers in exchange for the use of the facility's rehearsal space, which would be costly to rent. The Imagination Theater shares the services of a grant writer with several other small arts organizations. Executive Director Warren Baumgard notes that this relationship has been central to funding the program,

Because clients like us sort of share his cost with other clients we can afford somebody as high powered as he, when normally just a company like us could never afford him. He's very active. I mean what's great is he's truly a development person as opposed to just a grant writer. He's involved when we are sitting down planning new projects or coming up with new strategies or whatever...he has helped develop some programs here.

This investment has been worth the short-term costs as the Imagination Theater has been sustained over a rough period of administrative transition.

Many of these informal and creative collaborations are the outgrowth of personal relationships and friendships. Merit's exchange with CYC was inspired by an individual who sits on the board of both organizations. Carolyn Blunt of the Bridges Community Institute was uncertain of the direction her program would take upon leaving the city's YouthNet program.

Since this time she has operated out of an office donated by Malcolm X College to West Corps, another larger community organization. This relationship began out of Blunt's friendship with West Corps' director,

My relationship with West Corps is actually a friendship. They opened up their arms to me and they allow me to use their resources, to come down and use their computer. We don't have an office, but I can come down here and use the printer and the copier...I have given West Corps the benefit of my expertise. I actually do all their book work in terms of processing. It was a relationship born out of help. I wanted to help them so I got their 501 (c)(3) for them...so it was an exchange. I've never looked at it like that because I would have done it if they hadn't offered anything to me.

Both organizations have benefited from the relationship.

### **Obstacles to Working Together**

Despite the advantages of these highly individual affiliations, several factors, including the investment of time and staff, prevent grassroots agencies from taking advantage of them.

One problem encountered by several small agencies in attempting to develop and use external administrative resources has been a reluctance on the part of many community institutions to function as resources. As mentioned earlier, Carolyn Blunt has been unable to find public schools willing to provide space for her education programs. "The teachers don't want to stay late. They want to go home, but they don't want anybody in their classroom. They want to make sure the blackboards are clean...I understand if that were your own home, but they have the same concept about public facilities. So where we end up is in churches...but they don't have the accommodations."

Similarly, staff at one program have had trouble working with a city park that is a member of their network. Park representatives rarely attend meetings, and staff is unable to figure out productive ways to work with them. This tension has hampered the network's ability to use park space for their programs. Finally, the Board of Education has been unwilling to provide staff at National Student Alliance with public information regarding student council members necessary

for keeping their administrative records up to date. Bleicher and his staff have invested a great deal of time and money attempting to get the board to comply with their requests.

Reluctance on the part of the small agency can also prevent administrative resource sharing. As Duffie Adleson of Merit Music Program has observed, "I think that any partnership at any level takes time to launch, extra time, extra staff time and nurturing." The reality for many small organizations is that they simply do not have this time, especially in the administrative arena. When asked if he would consider joining a benefits pool with other agencies to provide health benefits to his employees, one executive director replied, "I don't think we even have the staff to broker that, you know, go to all the meetings and set something like that up. That's the main thing. It sounds great, but that would take so much work."

A second reason for resistance to collaboration is the idea that it is being imposed upon communities by external forces. Small organizations feel this pressure with regard to formal collaboration. Father Matt at SAFE made the following observation,

Let's say Funder X wants four organizations in a collaboration. That's great, but now those four organizations have to meet. So now you have to find somebody who is going to go to those meetings and work on the collaboration. Which is great--we don't have anybody...and that means you have to hire somebody to go into collaboration? "Who is pushing collaboration? It's the funders. And so how many times do they come into a community and look at a community and decide what a community needs...That's kind of my dilemma with collaboration. I just don't know if it is coming from this community, a decision of people who live here and live below poverty and live in the neighborhood for years.

Similar concerns were expressed by A1 Carter, "That's a white world [collaborations]...really we're the only black run agency in this area. Everything else is white mandated."

Other small agencies fear that participation in a collaboration may somehow compromise the program's agenda. This problem is a difficult one for small church-based agencies who have religious missions and programming agendas. Three of the networks interviewed for this study, ASAP, ALSO, and Greater Lawn Youth Community Network, have lost churches as members

due to their religious views. Although these conflicts tend to be programmatic ones, the entire network loses an administrative resource when a church declines participation. Pastor Terrell explains these situations from the church's point of view, "We all have more meetings than we are interested in going to...if we've got our vision that is different from theirs, do we really want to spend our time hammering out some common vision? So I would say...we have been a little more on the isolationist side--not always to our benefit, but sometimes."

Aside from religious differences, agencies often worry that their method of addressing perceived problems in the community might be different from that of the network or collaborative. As A1 Carter explains, "Everyone is not going to see the problem as the A1 Carter Youth Foundation sees it. I'm not a one man army. I don't pretend to be a one man army. I do cooperate with people, but I don't want to wait in line. We're a hands-on personality."

Carolyn Blunt expressed similar concerns about the decrease in program quality when she joined the YouthNet collaborative. "We combined our efforts with YouthNet and the quality of it was not what I like it to be because you were trying to run a large program, and you were constantly doing what everybody else wanted you to do...the Bridges objective is to help a few, and increase the quality of those few." Since many smaller programs take pride in their individual approaches to youth service, the notion of collaboration is threatening to their program identity.

Finally, in agencies where role conflation of program and administrative staff is the norm, it is often difficult for administrators to imagine shared staff collaboration in which staff may not be entirely mission driven. This sentiment was articulated by Rev. Haynes of Reach Out and Touch when asked about the notion of collaborating with other agencies to share a grant writer, "I'm torn on that...I think I'd be concerned about that. A grant writer...well, you know how it is to have favorites...so my concern is that a grant writer may have a favorite [among agencies] and then I don't know if everybody can bombard the same funders."

Bruce Ray of the Christian Care Center has attempted staff collaboration and has been dissatisfied with the results. "It's difficult. Our director was full-time, but part of her time was to be spent in the ALSO office. That was very hard because it was to be five hours a week, and so how do you do that? Do you do it one hour a day? Do you do it five hours a day? Well, that's difficult because then you have to break into your direct service time. So that was very difficult to coordinate." Accustomed to having a staff that is wholly dedicated to the success of their organization, it is difficult for small agencies to imagine collaborating in this manner.

## FINDINGS

It is apparent from the programs interviewed that underinvestment in the administrative side has left many small organizations struggling to meet programmatic needs. Other organizations that have sought out administrative help have been frustrated with problematic collaborations. Finally, a host of administrative resources targeting the needs of grassroots programs exist, but are not being utilized by many small organizations due to issues of access. The following points attempt to summarize the primary findings of the study.

*Grassroots programs do not uniformly perceive the benefits of investing in administrative support to outweigh the costs.* One of the clearest messages communicated by agency managers and administrators was that the costs of investing in almost any additional support outweighs the benefits. Seeking out creative support systems requires staff, time, and resources that grassroots agencies do not have. Furthermore, most administrators believe that any extra dollars should be directed toward their programming. Most executive directors of grassroots programs are intimately involved with their service population in a way that directors of larger programs are not, and are thus more likely to think in terms of specific youth rather than general service population. Since the majority of these programs serve inner-city youth with immediate needs and uncertain futures, it is difficult for those close to the youth to justify long-term administrative investment. When asked, most directors would rather find a way to accommodate ten more kids in their current programs than hire a part-time grants writer.

This choice to focus on the day-to-day programming rather than the administrative future of the organization has several implications. On the one hand it enables these programs to respond to immediate needs, needs that may not be met by larger agencies. On the other hand, the choice not to make an investment in the administrative side means fewer funds, higher staff turnover, and weaker governing boards.

*Requirements of funders are the largest source of administrative burden.* The requirements of funders, both public and private, absorb the greatest amount of administrative time and energy. The lack of developed administrative functions at small agencies make fundraising and follow-up a Herculean effort. Although this observation in and of itself is not surprising, the ripple effect can be felt at several organizational levels. Program staff at grassroots organizations are often involved in the funding process. Many write grants and accompany directors on solicitation calls to prospective funders. In participating, however, the staff are acutely conscious of spending time away from the kids, the job they feel they were hired to do. Similarly, executive directors at grassroots programs are almost always the primary fundraisers for the organization. Like the program staff, however, these directors are uncomfortable with the amount of time devoted to resource development. While they recognize the necessity, most directors feel that fundraising is being done at the expense of staff and board development, which they feel has a trickle down effect to youth being served by the program.

Although resource development is not an exact science, successful fundraising requires a comprehensive knowledge of available public and private resources and a high level of follow-through. In an increasingly competitive market for philanthropic dollars, grassroots programs often lack the resources to research prospective donors and comply with extensive reporting requests from both public and private funders. For the most part, grassroots programs are not being shut out of the funding process. However, their lack of resources means that the process is longer and full of frustrations. For example, a grassroots program may submit a proposal to a foundation which then sees merit in their mission but would like a clearer description of services. In this case, the proposal would be returned to the organization to be refined and submitted for consideration in the next grant cycle. Even if the request is granted, the funds are then coming some months past the anticipated date and have required twice the work.

*Grassroots administrators are uncomfortable with the notion of “business.”* Perhaps one of the most important messages from discussions with agency administrators is that many executive directors have little experience in the "business" side of management. Having come up the ranks through a programmatic route, many managers talk openly of their uncertainty in the administrative arena. Following recent trends in the nonprofit sector, grassroots administrators are beginning to work on board development and strategic planning. For many directors, however, these are new fields that require a knowledge of accounting, grant writing, and organizational governance--subjects that are not part of their direct service background.

What does this mean for grassroots organizations? As discussed earlier, a variety of resources exist to help the administrators of grassroots programs with these challenges. Directors who have little administrative experience, however, often have trouble defining and articulating their administrative needs. They are aware of the need for support but have difficulty discerning where the support is most needed. In these situations, managers tend to put Band-Aids on a number of problems while preserving the status quo rather than taking any radical action in the areas of board development, staff training, etc.

## STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

Given the above findings, it is apparent that careful thought and consideration are necessary in order to create meaningful and accessible supports for small programs. A lack of time and administrative focus demands that strategies for administrative support be developed in an intentional and responsive manner. The following models of administrative support attempt to respond directly to the findings of the study and to answer the unique needs of small programs. They are strategies which begin by meeting small programs where they are.

*Nonprofit incubators can offer comprehensive administrative support for grassroots programs.* In creating an administrative resource, it is helpful to offer a comprehensive package that addresses both the long term and short term needs of an organization. One model that takes this approach is this nonprofit incubator. Designed to help small nonprofits succeed and grow, incubators provide both practical and educational tools for those participating in their program. Windows of Opportunity, one of the programs interviewed for this study, considers itself a nonprofit incubator for public housing-based programs. Staff at Windows help fledgling programs with everything from writing solicitation letters to planning the program's annual budget. One program which has benefited from Window's assistance is the Midnight Basketball program for youth. Built slowly with the help of Window's staff, Midnight Basketball is now in the process of incorporating as its own 501(c)(3) status.

Another example of nonprofit incubator is an organization called Arts Bridge, which is operating in Chicago's Uptown neighborhood. Designed to provide only temporary service to its member agencies, Arts Bridge itself is a 501(c)(3). Small arts organizations with budgets ranging from \$30,000 - \$250,000 are invited to apply for membership in the incubator. Upon receiving membership, agencies pay a small fee to receive a host of administrative support including computer support, receptionist services, space for programs, options for bulk purchasing, and use

of office equipment. In addition to these supports, however, member agencies must agree to participate in a range of educational programs on subjects varying from management style to formulating a business plan. By offering this series of seminars, Arts Bridge is helping small programs move to financial and managerial independence. After one or two years in the incubator, Arts Bridge encourages programs to move out on their own into the community.

*The funding community, the largest source of administrative requirements, can take steps toward streamlining processes for grassroots agencies.* One such step to be taken in Chicago might be to promote the use of the Chicago Grantmakers Application. Designed to help organizations more efficiently apply for funds, this common application is accepted by a range of private and corporate foundations in the city. Of the administrators interviewed for this study, however, few had heard of the common application, and none had actually used the form. Likewise, an executive director of a large corporate giving program made the following observation, "Sure we accept it [the Grantmakers Application], but we never get it. Maybe one or two times in a year." When asked why this was the case she replied, "I think people just don't do their homework. They don't know it's out there."

Therefore, in their initial contact with a small program, it might be helpful for foundations to make clear that they accept the form. Similarly, in letters declining funding requests, foundations could enclose copies of the application and/or a list of other participating foundations as a way of pointing some smaller organizations in a new direction. Put to greater use, the Chicago Grantmakers Application could eliminate some of the time and energy which small agencies find themselves devoting to funders and fundraising.

A foundation-sponsored library of funding sources and management information for nonprofits, the Donor's Forum, has been of great help to several of the agencies interviewed for this study. While the library has been an important source of information and exchange for many

nonprofits willing to attend seminars and presentations, it could also be used to bridge what appears to be a large communication gap between funding sources and agencies applying for funds. The library currently hosts a series entitled "Dialogues with Donors" targeting this need. Unfortunately, many grassroots programs that are not networked in the funding community to the extent that larger agencies are and that do not have designated development staff have not traditionally made use of these programs. If the Donor's Forum could actively target smaller programs, offering a series devoted to the needs of grassroots agencies, perhaps some of the guesswork and frustration of fundraising could be eliminated. In addition, specifically inviting grassroots administrators may offer them a chance to network with other small programs experiencing similar challenges, and may encourage problem solving that is more reasonable and realistic for their size and capacity.

*There is a role for the corporate community in supporting the administration of small programs.* Given that many of the administrators to whom we spoke were uncomfortable with the "business" of their organizations, there seems to be a role for the corporate community in the administrative side of grassroots primary supports. With the exception of two organizations, no programs mentioned working with a specific corporation to meet some of their administrative needs.

One approach to involving corporations with small nonprofits in a meaningful and effective way is to have corporation employees offer hands-on technical assistance to small primary supports programs. Currently many large accounting firms offer compensatory pay to those employees willing to donate accounting services to nonprofits. This type of resource is an excellent one as the investment on the part of the program is rather minimal. Given that many small organizations were vocal about their need for technological support, it seems that this may be a growing area in which the corporate sector could be of help to small nonprofits. From

designing and maintaining a web site to putting into place the technology necessary to facilitate efficient administration, volunteers could offer the kind of wisdom that agency administrators do not have time to acquire on their own. If this sort of volunteerism was coupled with in-kind donations of computer equipment from corporations, small grassroots programs could make an important step forward in the management of their agencies.

## NEXT STEPS

In order to truly be of help to grassroots primary supports, administrative resources must seek to meet small programs as the programs themselves design them. Taken singly, any one of the above suggestions can work toward this goal. The answer, however, may lie in a synthesis of the above suggestions, an "administrative resource network," which offers a range of options from which small programs can select the help most beneficial to them. Different than the incubator model, a resource network would be a permanent support for grassroots programs offering the following services on an ongoing basis:

**Fundraising Assistance:** Network staff could work with executive directors on targeting appropriate funding sources, grant writing, and follow-up. Programs could also use technology and equipment at a central location to produce proposals and reports.

**Staff and Board Training:** Network staff could also find resources offering trainings, such as the Nonprofit Financial Center, and schedule training sessions to be attended by several grassroots organizations at one time.

**Links to the Corporate Community:** To help grassroots programs discover what resources are available within the corporate community, the network could compile and distribute information to smaller programs. Serving as a clearinghouse for people and resources available from the corporate community, the network could help make the initial links for programs who do not see a way to break into the world of corporate resources.

**Technology and Equipment:** A central location for the network could house a production room which grassroots programs could use, free of charge, to assemble materials, publicity, and reports. It could also provide computers with access to the Internet and to programs designed to help with accounting and budgeting.

**Resource Library:** The center could provide a sort of mini-Donor's Forum library that would house some of the current information available about both public and private funds. Similarly, copies of the common grant application could be made available to organizations.

## **CONCLUSION**

There are no simple solutions to the administrative challenges facing grassroots primary supports. Often driven by visionaries who are bettering the lives of children, these programs suffer administratively. By listening carefully to managers and administrators, however, it is possible to create resources that support the administrative function in a meaningful and effective manner. Without necessarily growing these small programs, such resources can help existing organizations to improve the quality of their service and better reach the youth of their communities.

## Appendix A

### **Participating Programs:**

The Al Carter Youth Foundation  
Greater Lawn Youth and Community Network  
St. Sylvester  
Free Street Theater  
Alliance of Logan Square Organizations  
After School Action Program  
Black on Black Love  
Northwest Youth Organization  
Merit Music Program  
Family Matters  
Imagination Theater  
St. Agatha's Family Empowerment  
Sports Affinity Task Force  
Inner City Impact  
Onward House  
Bridges Community Network  
Windows of Opportunity  
Reach Out and Touch  
Christ Evangelical Lutheran Church  
Youth Umbrella Organization  
Christian Care Center  
Illustrated Theater  
Student Alliance  
Tutor-Mentor Connections  
Gad's Hill  
Casa Juan Diegeo

## Appendix B

### **Core Interview Protocol Primary Support Organizational Issues Programs**

#### **Introduction:**

I am here from Chapin Hall Center for Children. Chapin Hall is interested in exploring the organizational challenges of grassroots youth service agencies and the support they can and do receive from the networks of which they are a part.

I would first like to ask you a number of questions so that we can learn more about your organization and its structure. These will include questions about your staffing, organizational structure, and resources. Then I would like to shift gears and ask you to think about your community, about the other grassroots youth service providers and networks for children operating in your community, as well as your role in this larger environment.

With your permission, I would like to tape record this interview. Your comments are confidential and will, together with other information, form the basis of our report. There are no right or wrong answers. We would simply like you to speak from your experience.

Can you first tell us a little bit about your agency?

#### **Scope:**

What kinds of programs do you offer?

Who are the youth attend your programs? (Age, gender, race/ethnicity, number served)

From how many sites does your program operate?

What facilities do you use (if not your own)?

Have you had trouble finding space to run you programs?

What children are not served by your organization? What other organizations in your neighborhood serve them?

#### **Structure:**

When was your organization founded?

Do you have a Board of Directors? How many members? Any committees to the board?

Is your organization incorporated in some way? Is it a 501(c)(3)?

What are the major organizational/administrative/management challenges currently facing your organization?

**Mission/Philosophy:** Do you have a formal organizational mission statement? Is there a way to describe your purpose and philosophy? How have the agency and its programs changed over time? What has been the impetus for change?

What else would you like to offer that you don't presently? What do you see as your role in the community?

Looking now at organizational issues,

**Resources:**

Can you tell me the approximate size of your budget?

How has the size of this budget changed over time?

What do you expect will happen in the future?

Who, if anyone, is your fiscal agent?

What are your organization's major expenses? Overhead costs:  
building/equipment/insurance?

Who are your primary funding sources? How has this changed over time?

Who conducts fundraising activities?

How are these resources allocated within the organization?

What are your major fundraising challenges?

**Program Operations:** How do people find out about your programs? Can you describe any outreach or marketing you may be doing? How does program creation and development come about?

**Staffing Operations:**

How many full and part time staff do you have? What % are administrative? (% Direct service?)

Where do staff come from? What is turnover like? Is it a problem?

Do you provide benefits? How do you think your salaries compare to other community agencies? (Salaries of program staff? Salaries of administrative staff?)

What role do volunteers play in your organization? (Supplemental staff, financial)

What type of training/staff development do you provide?

At this point we would like to shift focus and ask you some questions about the environment in which you operate. What can you tell us about the community in which you serve? Is there anything going on in the community, any changes or challenges, that you are concerned about addressing? How? Are you doing so?

What do you think you could use the most outside help with?

What kinds of help/resources would you like? From whom?

Have you ever considered sharing space with other nonprofits? Why or why not? Do have any institutional partnerships with public schools, parks, etc.? What are the benefits of this sort of partnership? The challenges?

What administrative resources have been central to your growth as an agency? Have partnerships helped or hindered?

You previously mentioned \_\_\_\_\_ as your major organizational challenges. How could a network of similar organizations, or organizations in the same community, help with this at all?

What administrative resources exist in your community? What would you need to access them?

## Appendix C

### **Core Interview Protocol Primary Support Organizational Issues Networks**

#### **Introduction:**

I am here from Chapin Hall Center for Children. Chapin Hall is interested in exploring the organizational challenges of grassroots youth service agencies and the support which they can and do receive from the networks of which they are part.

I would first like to ask you a number of questions so that we can learn more about your network and its structure. These will include questions about your staffing, organizational structure, resources, the programs which comprise it, and the community in which you operate. Then I would like to shift gears and ask you to think about your external environment, and also more generally about the way networks function in relation to this environment.

With your permission, I would like to tape record this interview. Your comments are confidential and will, together with other information, form the basis of our report. There are no right or wrong answers. We would simply like you to speak from your experience.

Can you first tell us a little bit about this network?

#### **Scope and Structure:**

How many and what types of programs are members of the network?

When was the network founded?

What models, if any, were used in developing the network?

Do you have a board or advisory committee? How is it structured?

Is your network incorporated in some way? Is it a 501(c)(3)?

#### **Mission/Philosophy:**

What is the mission of your network?

What's the most important thing you do?

Do you have a sense of the way your network is perceived by its members?

What is your role in the community?

What are the major challenges that your member agencies face?

Looking now at organizational issues,

#### **Resources:**

Can you tell me the approximate size of your budget?

How has the size of this budget changed over time?

Who are your primary funding sources? (% Private, % Government)

Who conducts fundraising activities?

How are financial and staff resources allocated among the various programs within the network?

What are the most pressing fundraising challenges?

### **Program Operations:**

How do organizations become members of your network?

Please describe the various ways the network supports member organizations.

Can you describe any outreach or marketing you may be doing through public relations or public awareness?

Can you describe any systems you may have in place for evaluating the success of your network?

Does your network feel pressure to demonstrate effectiveness? To network members? To funders? How do you do so?

How have the network and its programs changed over time?

What has been the impetus for change?

### **Staffing Operations:**

How large is your staff? What are their backgrounds and skills?

What role do staff from member agencies play?

How do most staff members spend their time?

What role do volunteers play in the network? (Supplemental staff, financial)

At this point we would like to shift focus and ask you some questions about the environment in which you operate.

What can you tell us about the community in which you serve? How do changes in the community or on the political landscape affect the way the network spends its time and resources?

How would you LIKE to spend your time and resources?

What are your expectations of the youth service agencies in your network?

What are their expectations of you?

How can a network best serve its community and its members?

What other supports and services do your agency members need? Who or what might provide them?