

COMMUNITY



ORGANIZING

TOOLBOX

Two In-Depth Case Studies

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TWO IN-DEPTH CASE STUDIES

INTRODUCTION

Over the past decade, CO's growing strength, sophistication and impact has attracted new interest and attention among grantmakers. This section describes how two foundations — one national, one local — made major commitments to CO.

Use their experiences to explore how CO strategies fit within and support your broader funding goals and objectives (a series of mini-case studies are sprinkled throughout the *Toolbox* to emphasize and illustrate key points made in the text).

These in-depth case studies were developed through on-site and telephone interviews with key foundation staff and trustees. In one, interviews were also conducted with selected grantees. Both draw extensively on public and internal documents such as annual reports, grantmaking guidelines, staff memos and positions papers.

The foundations studied are:

- **The Charles Stewart Mott Foundation**, a large national foundation with more than \$2.4 billion in assets in 1998 and grant allocations of \$88.2 million the same year. The foundation has domestic and international funding interests that include civil society, the environment, community education, and economic opportunity and development.
- **The Hyams Foundation, Inc.**, a private family foundation, funding in the greater Boston area with assets totaling \$160.6 billion in 2000 and grant allocations of \$4.4 million in 1999.

While each differs in size, style and approach, they share a number of common practices and themes.

- **Strong Institutional Commitments to CO Funding.** Each has made a deep and profound commitment to CO. Both launched a highly interactive and strategic planning process to develop a new mission statement and set of program priorities. The results were a clear institutional commitment to CO as a primary strategy to advance broader foundation objectives.
- **Dedicated Staff with CO Knowledge and Background.** Both hired staff with broad CO knowledge and experience to develop new grantmaking programs and priorities. These staff members actively sought to increase internal understanding and support of CO by synthesizing the research, convening formal and informal meetings, writing position papers, and bringing in the voices and experience of CO practitioners and technical assistance providers.
- **Pragmatic but Persistent Efforts.** In developing a CO grantmaking portfolio, staff members placed CO firmly within the foundation's own funding traditions and institutional

context. Pragmatic but persistent efforts were made to relate CO to previous grantmaking initiatives, often by explaining concretely how organizing strategies helped the foundation to build on past efforts, extend its impact, and embody its institutional values.

- **Continuous Staff Dialogue and Board-Staff Interaction.** Team-building, first at the staff and then at the trustee level, was critical in developing a broad-based consensus on the role and importance of CO for advancing the foundation's broader institutional goals and objectives. Critical opportunities were identified for staff and trustee site visits. There, they continued to learn about the local, state and national CO work and the impact of CO groups and networks. Discussion often focused on the simple justice inherent in organizing marginalized constituencies to gain their rightful place at public and private negotiating tables.
- **Attention to Broader Trends and Contexts.** Broader social, political and economic trends were identified and used to bolster arguments in favor of CO. For example, devolutionary trends that shifted decision-making power and authority from the federal to state governments was used as an opportunity to bring underrepresented constituencies to state and local negotiating tables, and even to coalesce groups around new national objectives.
- **Commitment to Program Review and Impact Evaluations.** CO impacts are documented by incorporating evaluation into grantmaking programs. At the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, staff have awarded grants to assist CO groups to assess the quality and impact of their own organizing efforts. The Foundation developed general and specific benchmarks by which to gauge progress in building national CO infrastructure. The Hyams Foundation also took seriously the need to assess progress, document impact, and distill lessons from its multi-year efforts supporting CO. It commissioned an independent evaluation of its first major CO funding initiative, which helped staff and trustees to distill and apply lessons learned to other areas of its grantmaking activity.

IN-DEPTH CASE STUDY #1

The Charles Stewart Mott Foundation

Type:	Independent
Location:	Flint, Michigan
Assets:	\$3.22 billion (12/31/99)
Major Program Categories:	Civil Society, Environment, Flint Area, Pathways Out of Poverty
Contact:	Ron White, Program Officer, Pathways Out of Poverty The Charles Stewart Mott Foundation 1200 Mott Foundation Bldg. Flint, MI 48502-1852 Phone: 810-238-5651 Fax: 810-238-8152 Email: Rwhite@mott.org
Mott on the Internet:	www.mott.org
For publications:	infocenter@mott.org

INTRODUCTION

When the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation began devising new funding mechanisms to support grassroots groups in the mid-1970s, support of CO in the foundation community was in its infancy. Much has changed since then, both in the field and among individual funders. The Mott Foundation has today become the first major national funder to establish a grantmaking program whose aim is to build the power and capacity of the CO field. That program — Building Organized Communities (BOC) — is part of a new, six-year plan for its Pathways Out of Poverty program that Mott trustees unanimously adopted in September 1999.

That plan is Mott's blueprint for funding one of its four major programs through 2005. Its mission is to *identify, test and help sustain pathways out of poverty for low-income people and communities*. Toward that end, the Foundation plans to give \$240 million over the next six years to nurture systemic change in the educational, economic and community dynamics that have produced and perpetuated poverty in the United States. Of that amount, the Foundation anticipates investing at least \$5.5 million per year to build CO infrastructure nationally and to support issue organizing at statewide and regional levels.

How did Mott's interests develop over the last 25 years from its earliest exploratory interests to the crucial role that CO plays in advancing the Foundation's anti-poverty objectives? This case study examines that history, highlighting key developments in its support of CO as an essential ingredient in its fight for a more just, equitable and sustainable society.

PIONEERING A NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR GRASSROOTS FUNDING

In many respects, the key to understanding the Mott Foundation's evolution lies in its principled and long-standing commitment to community. That commitment stretches back to C. S. Mott himself, who asserted that "every person, always, is in a kind of informal partnership with his community." Foundation President William S. White elaborated on this theme in *Neighborhood Organizing: Nurturing Strong United Voices*, a special section of the Foundation's 1984 annual report. White described the Foundation's "fundamental belief that our nation's greatest resource is the determination, experience, knowledge and unlimited potential of its citizens," and stressed the vital role that neighborhood-based organizations play in engaging and involving low-income people in the issues that affect their communities. "The Mott Foundation designed its neighborhood program with citizen involvement in mind," White wrote.

This commitment led the Foundation in the mid-1970s to pioneer the development of a national strategy for grassroots funding. While the strategy was not then based on CO principles, it did establish Mott as the first national foundation committed to using its resources

to help nascent neighborhood groups grow into viable community development organizations.

Mott launched its first such effort — Stimulating Neighborhood Action Program (SNAP) — in the 1970s. SNAP funded a network of organizations to provide small grants to community school councils involved in activities ranging from neighborhood newsletters to youth employment programs. After several years, it became clear that both seed money and technical assistance were needed to help stabilize and grow neighborhood organizations capable of taking on complex issues, and that a large national funder like Mott could not effectively manage a small grants program alone. This realization was reinforced when President White, asked the Center for Community Change (CCC) to assess the status of community building in Flint, Michigan, Mott's hometown. The Center issued a bleak report noting little or no positive community action and declaring the Foundation an obstacle to it. CCC recommended a program that would provide seed money and ongoing technical assistance to fledgling groups working in low-income communities around the country.

Mott's creative response was to launch the Intermediary Support Organization (ISO) program in 1979. Originally designed as a five-year national funding effort, the program is now in its 22nd year. The Foundation operates the program by distributing an annual grant of approximately \$300,000 to each of six Intermediary Support Organizations (ISOs). These ISOs then identify emerging groups in their catchment areas and provide them with small grants and technical support to help them grow financially and organizationally. Mott sets the program's basic parameters — each ISO must make annual grants of up to \$15,000 to a dozen or so groups — and then leaves the ISOs alone to select grantees and run their own technical assistance programs. Since the program's inception, Mott has invested some \$16 million in more than 1,000 neighborhood groups nationwide.

FROM COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT TO ANTI-POVERTY

Mott's success with the ISO program gradually led to new CO funding opportunities, according to Jack Litzenberg, who was involved with the ISO program in the 1980s. Larger economic and policy trends — including growing poverty and federal budget cuts — underscored the need for community action. As the ISO program evolved, it began to fund an increasing number of groups to organize low-income residents so that they would have a voice in the decisions that shaped their communities and their lives. In Wichita, Kansas, for example, Sunflower Community Action grew from a dozen low-income residents into an activist organization with more than 1,400 members in 35 neighborhoods. In Southern California, Concerned Citizens of South Central L.A. emerged as a major urban force with a \$7 million budget from its roots as a struggling coalition of three block clubs. And in Providence, Rhode Island, Direct Action for Rights and Equality (DARE), grew from its start as an economic justice campaign located in one neighborhood into a major institution now organizing childcare workers statewide.

Mott funded several independent assessments of the program — two by the Center for Community Change in Washington, D.C. and three by the Oakland, California-based Applied Research Center. All of the studies were supportive of the ISO program, including its evolving role in stimulating the growth of the CO field. These assessments would later be important, as Mott staff began to develop a strategy for building a stronger bridge between the CO field and the Foundation's 25 years of support for grassroots organizations.

In the late 1980s, almost a decade after the ISO program had begun, Mott President White initiated a strategic planning process that would set the stage for expanded CO funding efforts in 1999. Between 1988 and 1990, the Foundation worked with a consultant to identify the biggest issues then facing the nation and the world, and to develop grantmaking strategies to address them. Trustees were interviewed for their views on the country's most critical public needs, and staff members were asked to submit their written thoughts on the issues they thought the Foundation should most address. Six big issues emerged, with persistent poverty and education topping the list.

This planning process led the Foundation to emphasize poverty alleviation over community development. Litzenberg explained the significance of this shift: "In moving from community development to poverty alleviation as a funding orientation, we began to think more seriously about the need for poor people to have a voice in their own futures. It began to be our view that we needed to address one of the basic problems in low-income communities, which is that poor people are alienated from power." The Foundation's new poverty grantmaking guidelines explicitly included CO and grassroots leadership development as funded activities.

RATCHETING UP FOUNDATION SUPPORT FOR CO

It was in the late 1990s that the Mott Foundation made CO one of three strategies for poverty reduction. Its decision to do so reflected a two-year strategic planning process that Mott's poverty team initiated in 1997. Ron White, who joined the team as a program officer in 1997, played a key role in ratcheting up the Foundation's support for organizing. Hired specifically for his knowledge of the CO field, Ron White saw an opportunity to expand Mott's support of CO by building on the ISO program.

Planning efforts got underway formally in the fall of 1997, when the Foundation's poverty team traveled to New York City to discuss future anti-poverty grantmaking strategies with Mott trustees. Staff and trustees also made joint site visits to see the work of New York City-based CO grantees. Returning to Flint, the team planned eight staff learning sessions on topics from an overview of poverty in the United States, to the impact of public policies on low-income communities and grassroots organizing approaches to community change.

The first of two learning sessions on CO included a video case study examining how CO helped to rebuild Boston's Dudley Street neighborhood, followed by a discussion of the role

that CO plays in resident-led community renewal efforts. In the second staff learning day, Mott's team invited CO practitioners, technical assistance providers and funders to present their perspectives on the history, methods, strengths and weaknesses of the CO field. For both discussions, Ron White developed a briefing binder with selected readings on CO history, organizing models and policy impacts in the areas of Foundation concern. Readings included overviews of the CO field, work by the Industrial Areas Foundation's (IAF) Ernie Cortes on CO and social capital, and case studies of effective CO campaigns addressing such key issues as deindustrialization and education reform.

One month later, Maureen Smyth, Mott's vice president for programs, and three members of the poverty team traveled to South Texas to view first-hand the work of local IAF affiliates. The team met with IAF organizers and community leaders over several days in San Antonio, Brownsville and Austin. This trip not only laid a sound basis for further planning, but also led to a \$1 million grant — later increased to \$3 million over three years — to IAF's Texas Interfaith Education Fund to expand its organizing, leadership development, research and evaluation activities in 13 communities in five states. The grant, intended to build the IAF's general organizing capacity for education, economic opportunity and civic engagement, represented the cross-program efforts of Mott's entire poverty team.

Smyth noted the importance of the trip:

When we went down to see the IAF in Texas, you couldn't help but be impressed by the work they are doing. It became obvious that, whether you were talking about better schools, quality after school programs, or job creation, CO was producing many of the programs and outcomes that we cared about.

Building on the excitement generated by the Texas trip, Ron White then developed two internal memos that presented a rationale for funding CO at higher levels, highlighted new funding opportunities within the field, and recommended grants to major organizing groups, networks, and projects.

The first memo argued for direct funding of the major CO networks, describing them as “the next step in the structural evolution of grassroots civic involvement.” Noting that “Mott had demonstrated the foresight to establish its ISO program long before others in the field recognized the necessity,” the memo argued that the Foundation was “now in a position to be a leader in establishing support directly to organizing networks which have, as their primary task, the building and sustaining of highly effective and tested organizations in low-income communities all across the country.”

In making this case, White discussed the added value that he thought the CO networks would bring to Mott's long-term effort to build strong and effective grassroots community organizations through the ISO program. First, he noted that, unlike the intermediaries whose focus and expertise lies in helping new groups form, the CO networks continue their

relationship with local groups for years, and often for decades. Second, the networks' primary aim is to build strong, multi-issue organizations through the continuous development and mentoring of new leaders. Third, the networks usually teach a specific model of organizing, one that they have worked on and refined for years. And fourth, the networks charge dues to affiliates for their training and technical assistance, creating economies of scale while also ensuring their accountability and responsiveness to local needs. The memo also noted the CO networks' unique ability to link their affiliates together across states and communities to enable low-income constituencies to be heard on policy issues that transcend neighborhood boundaries.

The second memo proposed that the Foundation strengthen issue organizing at statewide and regional levels, with a particular focus on improving education and increasing economic opportunities in low-income communities. White reasoned that larger developments — the elimination of cash assistance to the poor as a federal entitlement and the devolution of power and authority from the federal government to the states — made it increasingly necessary for local groups to come together at state and regional levels to help shape public policy debates on issues of local concern. He proposed that Mott fund new regional or national structures or projects that could link and support low-income constituencies to address problems that are experienced locally but created externally.

Having laid out a rationale for a two-pronged funding strategy, White then recommended that Mott provide direct support to four major organizing networks and award grants to a half dozen or so groups working to develop regional and national policy campaigns.

BUILDING ORGANIZED COMMUNITIES

This is a very important moment in the field of community organizing. The capacity and sophistication of organizing networks has increased so dramatically. This fact, combined with the new awareness that all of the interest groups in the world will not have any major impact without constituency, has created great new organizing opportunities. I've always felt that if more money could go into the field, dramatic things could happen.

— Ron White, Program Officer, Pathways Out of Poverty

Mott's BOC program area today seeks to strengthen and sustain the involvement of low-income communities in policymaking arenas by enhancing the variety, geographic reach, influence and effectiveness of the CO field.

BOC's two program components include:

- **Building infrastructure** to improve the quality of CO in low-income communities by increasing resources to institutions, organizations, technical assistance providers and networks that produce, nurture or expand community-based organizations, or increase awareness of their effectiveness as an anti-poverty strategy nationally; and
- **Issue organizing** to strengthen the organizing infrastructure of state and regional issue collaborations that focus on improving education or increasing economic opportunity in low-income communities.

To achieve these objectives, Mott program staff are particularly interested in building the organizational capacity, financial stability and policy impacts of the major CO networks — especially those with an articulated social analysis of how to build power in low-income communities, an established CO method, and a significant geographic spread. Other infrastructure-building goals include increasing CO's influence and visibility by encouraging more relevant research, effective communications and the development of new philanthropic resources for CO.

Finally, BOC's resources are also targeted on projects that convene, network or link grassroots groups with grantees under the Mott-funded State Fiscal Analysis Initiative, a jointly funded program with the Ford Foundation and the Open Society Institute to increase the capacity of nonprofit groups to analyze the effects of state fiscal and tax policy decisions on low-income constituencies.

Since Mott trustees formally approved the Pathways Out of Poverty plan, the Foundation has invested millions of dollars to support CO nationwide, with sizable grants awarded in 1999 to almost all of the major organizing networks, including Direct Action and Research Training (DART), the IAF, Pacific Institute for Community Organizing (PICO) and the Gamaliel Foundation. Mott has also invested substantial grant resources to support the development of regional issue campaigns.

SELECTED GRANTEES

Infrastructure Building Grants

- Texas Industrial Areas Foundation (TIAF)/Texas Interfaith Education Fund. Received \$3 million to support TIAF's work in 13 Southwestern communities over three years, including organizing efforts to increase access to good jobs, improve educational outcomes for poor children, and rebuild citizen engagement through organizer trainings and leadership development activities.
- Pacific Institute for Community Organizing (PICO). Received \$600,000 to support issue development, organizational development, staff training, fundraising, and planning and management.
- The Gamaliel Foundation. Received \$240,000 to help create and nurture new statewide, regional and national campaigns; to expand capacity to provide leadership training, staff recruitment and mentoring, issue research and consultation; and to hire new staff to assist in campaign expansion and leadership development.
- Direct Action and Research Training Center (DART). Received \$300,000 to assist the network in building new state and regional organizations and developing DART's issue campaigns around public education, employment, banking policies and health care.

Regional and National Issue Organizing

- Partnership in Action for Authentic Community Development, Oxfam America's U.S. Program. Received \$500,000 to support Oxfam's efforts to increase capacity and collaborative effort among its 32 partner organizations in the Southeast. Through the Partnership in Action, Oxfam will expand its leadership training and focus on increasing regional issue analysis, organizing and coordinated policy advocacy.
- 9 to 5, National Association of Working Women. Received \$100,000 to support 9 to 5's Midwest campaign to improve job conditions for the working poor. The campaign is conducting research on contingent and part-time work in two Midwestern cities, training leaders to develop and implement local and regional organizing campaigns, and developing policy solutions to improve the more egregious workplace conditions and abuses.
- Northwest Federation of Community Organizations. Received \$156,080 to support the Federation's ability to conduct issue research, recruit and train leaders, and develop multi-state organizing campaigns on issues of concern to the region's most economically disenfranchised residents.

EXPANDING ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY AND IMPROVING COMMUNITY EDUCATION: CROSS-PROGRAM PERSPECTIVES ON THE ROLE OF CO

Community organizing is foundational. You can't do effective community development without it. Our plan at Mott is built around the idea that you have to organize communities around economic or educational equity agendas. It is ludicrous to think that you'll get good outcomes without an organized community.

— Jack Litzenberg, Senior Program Officer, Pathways Out of Poverty

The planning process that led to the development of BOC also generated significant new thinking among Pathways Out of Poverty program staff members who are involved in other areas of Mott's anti-poverty work. Increasingly, poverty program staff members are working together to recommend large, multi-year grants to CO networks or groups that address education and economic security issues through CO, leadership training, coalition-building and policy reform activities.

One good example of such integrated grantmaking is a \$3 million grant that Mott made to the IAF in 1998 to expand its organizing, leadership development, research and evaluation activities in 13 Southwestern communities. The Pathways Out of Poverty program staff worked collaboratively to support the IAF's work, with budgets from Mott's Improving Community Education, Expanding Economic Opportunity and Building Organized Communities components each contributing one-third of the total grant.

Poverty program staff members are also integrating CO strategies into their own grantmaking portfolios around education and income security. Mott's Community Education program provides a prime example. According to Zoe Gillett, a Mott associate program officer, CO has increasingly been seen by Community Education staff as a major and necessary component of effective school reform:

Over the years, what we have found in Community Education grantmaking is that school-community initiatives are among the most effective strategies for improving learner outcomes. It has thus made sense to build on these initiatives in order to enhance student learning. When we looked deeper at which school-community initiatives seemed to be most effective, it was the CO models that jumped out at us. Community organizing is not only increasing the number of parents involved in their children's education — one of the things that we know matters for sure in raising student achievement — it is also increasing the likelihood that other school reform strategies will be implemented more successfully.

The Foundation's Improving Community Education program area made grants totaling \$1.75 million in 1999 to support a growing number of CO groups and networks targeting high-poverty schools and districts for improvement. Grants in this program component, called "Success in School," are expected to continue through 2005 at the level of \$2.75 million per year or higher. The program has supported an impressive array of school reform campaigns around the country. Current grantees under Mott's Improving Community Education program include PICO, ACORN, the Eastern Philadelphia Organizing Project and Youth United for Change. All are using increasingly sophisticated organizing strategies to improve educational opportunities for low-income children through campaigns for more rigorous coursework, quality after-school programs, improved professional development for teachers and better school facilities.

Recognizing the synergy that has developed across Mott's funding programs, Gillett noted that many of the CO groups that she now supports were first funded under Mott's ISO program:

We are very fortunate at Mott to have such a strong history with community organizing. Much of the success we have experienced through Success in School is because we have built on the CO funding efforts of Building Organized Communities, first through the ISO program and now through funding of the networks. The ISO program is helping new organizations to develop, many of which are tackling education. As a result, more than half of our demonstrations projects in Success in School have participated in the ISO program or are affiliates of a network that has received Mott support.

CHARTING PROGRESS

Following the decision to invest millions of dollars between 2000 and 2005 in CO, Mott trustees encouraged staff to further refine the key program objectives and progress indicators the Foundation can use to assess how well BOC meets its goals. Program staff worked collaboratively to identify the five following objectives:

- Enhancing the leadership capabilities of local organizing networks by increasing the number of paid, professional organizers in the field;
- Building the research and information dissemination capacity of the CO sector;
- Increasing public understanding of and support for CO groups, intermediary organizations and CO networks;
- Developing the organizing infrastructure for statewide and regional policy campaigns to expand educational and economic opportunities; and

- Creating new linkages between state policy analysis organizations and grassroots organizing with statewide or regional organizing campaigns.

Staff also outlined progress indicators and convening or evaluation activities in several key areas. Together, they convey the seriousness of Mott's commitment to building the power and capacity of the CO field.

- **Leadership Development.** Program staff expect Mott funding to help the CO networks double their collective capacities to train new local leaders by adding at least 15 professional organizers each year between 2000 and 2005. The Foundation plans to facilitate the recruitment, training, assignment, professional development and retention of professional organizers by establishing a permanent task force, including representatives from all of the major CO networks, to work with the Foundation in determining the field's human resource and support needs. Mott staff have committed to periodic evaluations — one in 2002 and another in 2004 — to assess the degree to which the networks have been able to create a more stable, professional and effective group of organizers.
- **Research and Dissemination.** Program staff members expect that alternative and grassroots think tanks and resource centers will become more financially secure and more capable of producing credible, focused research and information on the issues facing low-income constituencies. Program staff members hope to see these think tanks increasingly merged with or connected to strong organizing efforts. Program staff will also look for significantly increased media coverage of CO activities and impact. To encourage greater coverage, Mott staff plans to convene its CO and ISO grantees to develop local, state and national media strategies, and to harness the power of the Internet to influence public opinion.
- **Statewide and National Issue Campaigns.** Program staff expects that BOC funding strategies will produce at least 15 state welfare or economic security campaigns between 2000 and 2005, with ten achieving significant wins on behalf of low-income people. Staff will also look for at least one national issue campaign to emerge by 2001 on the issue of federal welfare reform. Staff expects, as well, that one-third of the major CO networks will develop and assist state and regional collaborations or organizations, with at least five state issue campaigns becoming active on educational equity issues. The Foundation also plans to convene state policy groups and organizing networks to tighten coordination around key education and economic issues in 2001, and to follow up two years later to determine how the meeting helped to shape future work and the effectiveness of both sectors or constituencies.

CONCLUSION

In talking with Mott staff and trustees, one is tempted to interpret the Foundation's current CO funding efforts as an expansion of effort, with staff working across Pathways Out of Poverty's three program areas to build on and deepen the Foundation's 25-year history of support for grassroots community organizations. In many respects, they are right. Clearly, Mott's strong community orientation, leading to the development and long-term support of its ISO program, laid a significant foundation for subsequent funding developments. Such an interpretation would not do full justice to Mott's evolution, for the Foundation has traveled quite a distance from the early days of the ISO program.

Then, the ISO program supported a blend of community building, development and organizing activities in ways that neither distinguished between, nor focused on, aggregating the voices of low-income people. Today, the Foundation will be committing substantial resources — projected at \$5.5 million per year or more through 2005 — to enhance the organizational capacity, resource base and policy impact of the CO field locally, regionally and nationally. It is closing in on a serious, focused, strategic and explicit way to organize communities to shape their own futures through concerted community and political action.

Evidence of Mott's seriousness of purpose is not only seen in the level of resources that Mott is committing to CO, but also in the size and multi-year character of its CO grants; the explicit power-building language that Mott uses in its grantmaking guidelines; the interlocking strategies developed to build CO infrastructure and policy campaigns at state, regional and national levels; the significant cross-program collaboration and support for CO that is occurring within the Pathways Out of Poverty team; and the specificity with which program staff have developed program benchmarks and progress indicators.

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PIONEERING A NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR GRASSROOTS FUNDING

In many respects, the key to understanding the Mott Foundation's evolution lies in its principled and long-standing commitment to community. That commitment stretches back to C. S. Mott himself, who asserted that "every person, always, is in a kind of informal partnership with his community." Foundation President William S. White elaborated on this theme in *Neighborhood Organizing: Nurturing Strong United Voices*, a special section of the Foundation's 1984 annual report. White described the Foundation's "fundamental belief that our nation's greatest resource is the determination, experience, knowledge and unlimited potential of its citizens," and stressed the vital role that neighborhood-based organizations play in engaging and involving low-income people in the issues that affect their communities. "The Mott Foundation designed its neighborhood program with citizen involvement in mind," White wrote.

This commitment led the Foundation in the mid-1970s to pioneer the development of a national strategy for grassroots funding. While the strategy was not then based on CO principles, it did establish Mott as the first national foundation committed to using its resources

to help nascent neighborhood groups grow into viable community development organizations.

Mott launched its first such effort — Stimulating Neighborhood Action Program (SNAP) — in the 1970s. SNAP funded a network of organizations to provide small grants to community school councils involved in activities ranging from neighborhood newsletters to youth employment programs. After several years, it became clear that both seed money and technical assistance were needed to help stabilize and grow neighborhood organizations capable of taking on complex issues, and that a large national funder like Mott could not effectively manage a small grants program alone. This realization was reinforced when President White, asked the Center for Community Change (CCC) to assess the status of community building in Flint, Michigan, Mott's hometown. The Center issued a bleak report noting little or no positive community action and declaring the Foundation an obstacle to it. CCC recommended a program that would provide seed money and ongoing technical assistance to fledgling groups working in low-income communities around the country.

Mott's creative response was to launch the Intermediary Support Organization (ISO) program in 1979. Originally designed as a five-year national funding effort, the program is now in its 22nd year. The Foundation operates the program by distributing an annual grant of approximately \$300,000 to each of six Intermediary Support Organizations (ISOs). These ISOs then identify emerging groups in their catchment areas and provide them with small grants and technical support to help them grow financially and organizationally. Mott sets the program's basic parameters — each ISO must make annual grants of up to \$15,000 to a dozen or so groups — and then leaves the ISOs alone to select grantees and run their own technical assistance programs. Since the program's inception, Mott has invested some \$16 million in more than 1,000 neighborhood groups nationwide.

FROM COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT TO ANTI-POVERTY

Mott's success with the ISO program gradually led to new CO funding opportunities, according to Jack Litzenberg, who was involved with the ISO program in the 1980s. Larger economic and policy trends — including growing poverty and federal budget cuts — underscored the need for community action. As the ISO program evolved, it began to fund an increasing number of groups to organize low-income residents so that they would have a voice in the decisions that shaped their communities and their lives. In Wichita, Kansas, for example, Sunflower Community Action grew from a dozen low-income residents into an activist organization with more than 1,400 members in 35 neighborhoods. In Southern California, Concerned Citizens of South Central L.A. emerged as a major urban force with a \$7 million budget from its roots as a struggling coalition of three block clubs. And in Providence, Rhode Island, Direct Action for Rights and Equality (DARE), grew from its start as an economic justice campaign located in one neighborhood into a major institution now organizing childcare workers statewide.

Mott funded several independent assessments of the program — two by the Center for Community Change in Washington, D.C. and three by the Oakland, California-based Applied Research Center. All of the studies were supportive of the ISO program, including its evolving role in stimulating the growth of the CO field. These assessments would later be important, as Mott staff began to develop a strategy for building a stronger bridge between the CO field and the Foundation's 25 years of support for grassroots organizations.

In the late 1980s, almost a decade after the ISO program had begun, Mott President White initiated a strategic planning process that would set the stage for expanded CO funding efforts in 1999. Between 1988 and 1990, the Foundation worked with a consultant to identify the biggest issues then facing the nation and the world, and to develop grantmaking strategies to address them. Trustees were interviewed for their views on the country's most critical public needs, and staff members were asked to submit their written thoughts on the issues they thought the Foundation should most address. Six big issues emerged, with persistent poverty and education topping the list.

This planning process led the Foundation to emphasize poverty alleviation over community development. Litzenberg explained the significance of this shift: "In moving from community development to poverty alleviation as a funding orientation, we began to think more seriously about the need for poor people to have a voice in their own futures. It began to be our view that we needed to address one of the basic problems in low-income communities, which is that poor people are alienated from power." The Foundation's new poverty grantmaking guidelines explicitly included CO and grassroots leadership development as funded activities.

RATCHETING UP FOUNDATION SUPPORT FOR CO

It was in the late 1990s that the Mott Foundation made CO one of three strategies for poverty reduction. Its decision to do so reflected a two-year strategic planning process that Mott's poverty team initiated in 1997. Ron White, who joined the team as a program officer in 1997, played a key role in ratcheting up the Foundation's support for organizing. Hired specifically for his knowledge of the CO field, Ron White saw an opportunity to expand Mott's support of CO by building on the ISO program.

Planning efforts got underway formally in the fall of 1997, when the Foundation's poverty team traveled to New York City to discuss future anti-poverty grantmaking strategies with Mott trustees. Staff and trustees also made joint site visits to see the work of New York City-based CO grantees. Returning to Flint, the team planned eight staff learning sessions on topics from an overview of poverty in the United States, to the impact of public policies on low-income communities and grassroots organizing approaches to community change.

The first of two learning sessions on CO included a video case study examining how CO helped to rebuild Boston's Dudley Street neighborhood, followed by a discussion of the role

that CO plays in resident-led community renewal efforts. In the second staff learning day, Mott's team invited CO practitioners, technical assistance providers and funders to present their perspectives on the history, methods, strengths and weaknesses of the CO field. For both discussions, Ron White developed a briefing binder with selected readings on CO history, organizing models and policy impacts in the areas of Foundation concern. Readings included overviews of the CO field, work by the Industrial Areas Foundation's (IAF) Ernie Cortes on CO and social capital, and case studies of effective CO campaigns addressing such key issues as deindustrialization and education reform.

One month later, Maureen Smyth, Mott's vice president for programs, and three members of the poverty team traveled to South Texas to view first-hand the work of local IAF affiliates. The team met with IAF organizers and community leaders over several days in San Antonio, Brownsville and Austin. This trip not only laid a sound basis for further planning, but also led to a \$1 million grant — later increased to \$3 million over three years — to IAF's Texas Interfaith Education Fund to expand its organizing, leadership development, research and evaluation activities in 13 communities in five states. The grant, intended to build the IAF's general organizing capacity for education, economic opportunity and civic engagement, represented the cross-program efforts of Mott's entire poverty team.

Smyth noted the importance of the trip:

When we went down to see the IAF in Texas, you couldn't help but be impressed by the work they are doing. It became obvious that, whether you were talking about better schools, quality after school programs, or job creation, CO was producing many of the programs and outcomes that we cared about.

Building on the excitement generated by the Texas trip, Ron White then developed two internal memos that presented a rationale for funding CO at higher levels, highlighted new funding opportunities within the field, and recommended grants to major organizing groups, networks, and projects.

The first memo argued for direct funding of the major CO networks, describing them as “the next step in the structural evolution of grassroots civic involvement.” Noting that “Mott had demonstrated the foresight to establish its ISO program long before others in the field recognized the necessity,” the memo argued that the Foundation was “now in a position to be a leader in establishing support directly to organizing networks which have, as their primary task, the building and sustaining of highly effective and tested organizations in low-income communities all across the country.”

In making this case, White discussed the added value that he thought the CO networks would bring to Mott's long-term effort to build strong and effective grassroots community organizations through the ISO program. First, he noted that, unlike the intermediaries whose focus and expertise lies in helping new groups form, the CO networks continue their

relationship with local groups for years, and often for decades. Second, the networks' primary aim is to build strong, multi-issue organizations through the continuous development and mentoring of new leaders. Third, the networks usually teach a specific model of organizing, one that they have worked on and refined for years. And fourth, the networks charge dues to affiliates for their training and technical assistance, creating economies of scale while also ensuring their accountability and responsiveness to local needs. The memo also noted the CO networks' unique ability to link their affiliates together across states and communities to enable low-income constituencies to be heard on policy issues that transcend neighborhood boundaries.

The second memo proposed that the Foundation strengthen issue organizing at statewide and regional levels, with a particular focus on improving education and increasing economic opportunities in low-income communities. White reasoned that larger developments — the elimination of cash assistance to the poor as a federal entitlement and the devolution of power and authority from the federal government to the states — made it increasingly necessary for local groups to come together at state and regional levels to help shape public policy debates on issues of local concern. He proposed that Mott fund new regional or national structures or projects that could link and support low-income constituencies to address problems that are experienced locally but created externally.

Having laid out a rationale for a two-pronged funding strategy, White then recommended that Mott provide direct support to four major organizing networks and award grants to a half dozen or so groups working to develop regional and national policy campaigns.

BUILDING ORGANIZED COMMUNITIES

This is a very important moment in the field of community organizing. The capacity and sophistication of organizing networks has increased so dramatically. This fact, combined with the new awareness that all of the interest groups in the world will not have any major impact without constituency, has created great new organizing opportunities. I've always felt that if more money could go into the field, dramatic things could happen.

— Ron White, Program Officer, Pathways Out of Poverty

Mott's BOC program area today seeks to strengthen and sustain the involvement of low-income communities in policymaking arenas by enhancing the variety, geographic reach, influence and effectiveness of the CO field.

BOC's two program components include:

- **Building infrastructure** to improve the quality of CO in low-income communities by increasing resources to institutions, organizations, technical assistance providers and networks that produce, nurture or expand community-based organizations, or increase awareness of their effectiveness as an anti-poverty strategy nationally; and
- **Issue organizing** to strengthen the organizing infrastructure of state and regional issue collaborations that focus on improving education or increasing economic opportunity in low-income communities.

To achieve these objectives, Mott program staff are particularly interested in building the organizational capacity, financial stability and policy impacts of the major CO networks — especially those with an articulated social analysis of how to build power in low-income communities, an established CO method, and a significant geographic spread. Other infrastructure-building goals include increasing CO's influence and visibility by encouraging more relevant research, effective communications and the development of new philanthropic resources for CO.

Finally, BOC's resources are also targeted on projects that convene, network or link grassroots groups with grantees under the Mott-funded State Fiscal Analysis Initiative, a jointly funded program with the Ford Foundation and the Open Society Institute to increase the capacity of nonprofit groups to analyze the effects of state fiscal and tax policy decisions on low-income constituencies.

Since Mott trustees formally approved the Pathways Out of Poverty plan, the Foundation has invested millions of dollars to support CO nationwide, with sizable grants awarded in 1999 to almost all of the major organizing networks, including Direct Action and Research Training (DART), the IAF, Pacific Institute for Community Organizing (PICO) and the Gamaliel Foundation. Mott has also invested substantial grant resources to support the development of regional issue campaigns.

SELECTED GRANTEES

Infrastructure Building Grants

- Texas Industrial Areas Foundation (TIAF)/Texas Interfaith Education Fund. Received \$3 million to support TIAF's work in 13 Southwestern communities over three years, including organizing efforts to increase access to good jobs, improve educational outcomes for poor children, and rebuild citizen engagement through organizer trainings and leadership development activities.
- Pacific Institute for Community Organizing (PICO). Received \$600,000 to support issue development, organizational development, staff training, fundraising, and planning and management.
- The Gamaliel Foundation. Received \$240,000 to help create and nurture new statewide, regional and national campaigns; to expand capacity to provide leadership training, staff recruitment and mentoring, issue research and consultation; and to hire new staff to assist in campaign expansion and leadership development.
- Direct Action and Research Training Center (DART). Received \$300,000 to assist the network in building new state and regional organizations and developing DART's issue campaigns around public education, employment, banking policies and health care.

Regional and National Issue Organizing

- Partnership in Action for Authentic Community Development, Oxfam America's U.S. Program. Received \$500,000 to support Oxfam's efforts to increase capacity and collaborative effort among its 32 partner organizations in the Southeast. Through the Partnership in Action, Oxfam will expand its leadership training and focus on increasing regional issue analysis, organizing and coordinated policy advocacy.
- 9 to 5, National Association of Working Women. Received \$100,000 to support 9 to 5's Midwest campaign to improve job conditions for the working poor. The campaign is conducting research on contingent and part-time work in two Midwestern cities, training leaders to develop and implement local and regional organizing campaigns, and developing policy solutions to improve the more egregious workplace conditions and abuses.
- Northwest Federation of Community Organizations. Received \$156,080 to support the Federation's ability to conduct issue research, recruit and train leaders, and develop multi-state organizing campaigns on issues of concern to the region's most economically disenfranchised residents.

EXPANDING ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY AND IMPROVING COMMUNITY EDUCATION: CROSS-PROGRAM PERSPECTIVES ON THE ROLE OF CO

Community organizing is foundational. You can't do effective community development without it. Our plan at Mott is built around the idea that you have to organize communities around economic or educational equity agendas. It is ludicrous to think that you'll get good outcomes without an organized community.

— Jack Litzenberg, Senior Program Officer, Pathways Out of Poverty

The planning process that led to the development of BOC also generated significant new thinking among Pathways Out of Poverty program staff members who are involved in other areas of Mott's anti-poverty work. Increasingly, poverty program staff members are working together to recommend large, multi-year grants to CO networks or groups that address education and economic security issues through CO, leadership training, coalition-building and policy reform activities.

One good example of such integrated grantmaking is a \$3 million grant that Mott made to the IAF in 1998 to expand its organizing, leadership development, research and evaluation activities in 13 Southwestern communities. The Pathways Out of Poverty program staff worked collaboratively to support the IAF's work, with budgets from Mott's Improving Community Education, Expanding Economic Opportunity and Building Organized Communities components each contributing one-third of the total grant.

Poverty program staff members are also integrating CO strategies into their own grantmaking portfolios around education and income security. Mott's Community Education program provides a prime example. According to Zoe Gillett, a Mott associate program officer, CO has increasingly been seen by Community Education staff as a major and necessary component of effective school reform:

Over the years, what we have found in Community Education grantmaking is that school-community initiatives are among the most effective strategies for improving learner outcomes. It has thus made sense to build on these initiatives in order to enhance student learning. When we looked deeper at which school-community initiatives seemed to be most effective, it was the CO models that jumped out at us. Community organizing is not only increasing the number of parents involved in their children's education — one of the things that we know matters for sure in raising student achievement — it is also increasing the likelihood that other school reform strategies will be implemented more successfully.

The Foundation's Improving Community Education program area made grants totaling \$1.75 million in 1999 to support a growing number of CO groups and networks targeting high-poverty schools and districts for improvement. Grants in this program component, called "Success in School," are expected to continue through 2005 at the level of \$2.75 million per year or higher. The program has supported an impressive array of school reform campaigns around the country. Current grantees under Mott's Improving Community Education program include PICO, ACORN, the Eastern Philadelphia Organizing Project and Youth United for Change. All are using increasingly sophisticated organizing strategies to improve educational opportunities for low-income children through campaigns for more rigorous coursework, quality after-school programs, improved professional development for teachers and better school facilities.

Recognizing the synergy that has developed across Mott's funding programs, Gillett noted that many of the CO groups that she now supports were first funded under Mott's ISO program:

We are very fortunate at Mott to have such a strong history with community organizing. Much of the success we have experienced through Success in School is because we have built on the CO funding efforts of Building Organized Communities, first through the ISO program and now through funding of the networks. The ISO program is helping new organizations to develop, many of which are tackling education. As a result, more than half of our demonstrations projects in Success in School have participated in the ISO program or are affiliates of a network that has received Mott support.

CHARTING PROGRESS

Following the decision to invest millions of dollars between 2000 and 2005 in CO, Mott trustees encouraged staff to further refine the key program objectives and progress indicators the Foundation can use to assess how well BOC meets its goals. Program staff worked collaboratively to identify the five following objectives:

- Enhancing the leadership capabilities of local organizing networks by increasing the number of paid, professional organizers in the field;
- Building the research and information dissemination capacity of the CO sector;
- Increasing public understanding of and support for CO groups, intermediary organizations and CO networks;
- Developing the organizing infrastructure for statewide and regional policy campaigns to expand educational and economic opportunities; and

- Creating new linkages between state policy analysis organizations and grassroots organizing with statewide or regional organizing campaigns.

Staff also outlined progress indicators and convening or evaluation activities in several key areas. Together, they convey the seriousness of Mott's commitment to building the power and capacity of the CO field.

- **Leadership Development.** Program staff expect Mott funding to help the CO networks double their collective capacities to train new local leaders by adding at least 15 professional organizers each year between 2000 and 2005. The Foundation plans to facilitate the recruitment, training, assignment, professional development and retention of professional organizers by establishing a permanent task force, including representatives from all of the major CO networks, to work with the Foundation in determining the field's human resource and support needs. Mott staff have committed to periodic evaluations — one in 2002 and another in 2004 — to assess the degree to which the networks have been able to create a more stable, professional and effective group of organizers.
- **Research and Dissemination.** Program staff members expect that alternative and grassroots think tanks and resource centers will become more financially secure and more capable of producing credible, focused research and information on the issues facing low-income constituencies. Program staff members hope to see these think tanks increasingly merged with or connected to strong organizing efforts. Program staff will also look for significantly increased media coverage of CO activities and impact. To encourage greater coverage, Mott staff plans to convene its CO and ISO grantees to develop local, state and national media strategies, and to harness the power of the Internet to influence public opinion.
- **Statewide and National Issue Campaigns.** Program staff expects that BOC funding strategies will produce at least 15 state welfare or economic security campaigns between 2000 and 2005, with ten achieving significant wins on behalf of low-income people. Staff will also look for at least one national issue campaign to emerge by 2001 on the issue of federal welfare reform. Staff expects, as well, that one-third of the major CO networks will develop and assist state and regional collaborations or organizations, with at least five state issue campaigns becoming active on educational equity issues. The Foundation also plans to convene state policy groups and organizing networks to tighten coordination around key education and economic issues in 2001, and to follow up two years later to determine how the meeting helped to shape future work and the effectiveness of both sectors or constituencies.

CONCLUSION

In talking with Mott staff and trustees, one is tempted to interpret the Foundation's current CO funding efforts as an expansion of effort, with staff working across Pathways Out of Poverty's three program areas to build on and deepen the Foundation's 25-year history of support for grassroots community organizations. In many respects, they are right. Clearly, Mott's strong community orientation, leading to the development and long-term support of its ISO program, laid a significant foundation for subsequent funding developments. Such an interpretation would not do full justice to Mott's evolution, for the Foundation has traveled quite a distance from the early days of the ISO program.

Then, the ISO program supported a blend of community building, development and organizing activities in ways that neither distinguished between, nor focused on, aggregating the voices of low-income people. Today, the Foundation will be committing substantial resources — projected at \$5.5 million per year or more through 2005 — to enhance the organizational capacity, resource base and policy impact of the CO field locally, regionally and nationally. It is closing in on a serious, focused, strategic and explicit way to organize communities to shape their own futures through concerted community and political action.

Evidence of Mott's seriousness of purpose is not only seen in the level of resources that Mott is committing to CO, but also in the size and multi-year character of its CO grants; the explicit power-building language that Mott uses in its grantmaking guidelines; the interlocking strategies developed to build CO infrastructure and policy campaigns at state, regional and national levels; the significant cross-program collaboration and support for CO that is occurring within the Pathways Out of Poverty team; and the specificity with which program staff have developed program benchmarks and progress indicators.

IN-DEPTH CASE STUDY #2

The Hyams Foundation

Type:	Private
Location:	Boston, Massachusetts
Assets:	\$160.6 Million (6/30/00)
Major Program Categories:	Civic Participation, Community Economic Development and Youth Development
Contact:	Henry Allen, Senior Program Officer Hyams Foundation, 175 Federal Street, 14th Floor Boston, MA 02110, Phone 617-426-5600 Fax 617-426-5696 Email: hallen@hyamsfoundation.org

INTRODUCTION

We fund organizing because it has significant potential to bring about change, and change is what we're all about. The reason that CO has this potential is because it brings people together to speak in one voice. The power of this is tremendous, especially when the voices that you're bringing together are those that traditionally have been left out of policy debates. What one usually hears is the voice of one or two people. But if you're trying to influence public decisions affecting powerless groups, you're going to need a lot more people than that.

— Beth Smith, Executive Director, The Hyams Foundation

Through its Civic Participation grantmaking program, the Hyams Foundation allocates roughly one-third of its grants to support community organizing, leadership development, voter and citizen participation, and public-policy advocacy. CO anchors the program, with special grantmaking emphasis placed on civic participation activities that combine public-policy advocacy with organizing, or that promote voter education and registration within a CO framework. Under new grantmaking guidelines, priority is given to groups with the strongest commitment to building and sustaining democratic and participatory organizations based in and accountable to low-income communities.

The Hyams Foundation has not always embraced CO as a major funding strategy. Still, many within the Foundation see its support for CO as a natural extension of earlier work. One can understand why. The Foundation has long been known for its strong neighborhood funding orientation, respect for local leadership, commitment to building local institutional capacity, and concern for low-income communities. Such a view, however, belies the highly deliberate, thoughtful, strategic and, above all, persistent role that key individuals played over a number of years in opening up the Foundation to serious consideration and ultimate embrace of CO as an effective social and community change strategy. In a period of about seven years, Hyams went from being a grantmaker with modest commitments to CO to one that has made CO a central feature of its grantmaking program.

This case study examines the process that led Hyams trustees to vastly increase the Foundation's support of organizing. It also describes some of the new efforts and initiatives that Hyams staff and trustees have undertaken to increase the pool of money for grassroots organizing and leadership development in low-income communities.

LAYING THE GROUNDWORK

Beginning in the 1980's, The Hyams Foundation began to lay what would, in retrospect, become important groundwork for developing and institutionalizing a CO portfolio. First, the Foundation adopted an approach to its grantmaking that emphasized the involvement of the residents of low-income neighborhoods in issues of importance to them. While this did not always translate into an organizing approach, the Foundation funded a small number of grantees that included organizing in their work (such as the Committee for Boston Public Housing, first funded in 1981, and Massachusetts Senior Action Council, first funded in 1986). The Foundation also was involved in initiating a major multi-year effort designed, in part, to increase the participation of low-income tenants in the rehabilitation and maintenance of their housing.

In addition, the Foundation staff was influenced by the precedent-setting work of The Boston Foundation (TBF) which, in 1989, created a new program to provide grants to CO organizations. TBF staff became a resource to Hyams staff as they learned more about CO groups and helped to raise general awareness about this relatively new area of funding. In

1990, the Hyams Foundation and TBF came together with several other funders interested in funding organizing through Associated Grantmakers of Massachusetts (AGM). As a part of this work, AGM sponsored a seminar for funders titled Expanding Community Participation in early 1990 and produced a primer on *Funding Community Organizing* in 1991. The Foundation used these additional opportunities to learn more about funding organizing, and to share its experiences supporting CO organizations.

Finally, the Foundation's eventual focus on CO was influenced by the composition of both the Hyams staff and board. At the board level, the trustees had made a commitment to increasing not only the racial and ethnic diversity of the board, but also to adding the perspectives of individuals with significant direct experience in low-income communities. The Foundation's diversity-related work evolved over a period of years and resulted, among other things, in a formal Statement of Diversity Principles that includes values such as "recognizing and amplifying communities' voices," "building on the strengths of community residents" and "developing local leadership." Two trustees in particular — James Jennings, who joined the board in 1991, and Meizhu Lui, who joined in 1995 — were very knowledgeable about CO. Both also were trustees of color. Their experiences added to those of Harry Spence, a trustee from 1983 to 1995 (he recently rejoined the board in September of 2000), who, as the former receiver of the Boston Housing Authority, had been a firm believer in developing strong tenant organizations and leaders.

According to Harry Spence, the Foundation's efforts to become a more diverse organization also increased its capacity to debate hard topics, something that would later be important in the evolution of its grantmaking priorities:

By their nature, foundation boards fear conflict and seek consensus. In order to get to organizing, it was important to build a culture that embraces diversity and is able to deal with the conflict that such diversity can produce. Our commitment to transforming the racial and class composition of the Hyams board developed our ability to address controversial issues. The arguments we had internally about race and class were also about how to make change in the neighborhoods we focused on. In this sense, diversity opened up opportunities for the board to examine and commit to CO as an important method of change.

— Harry Spence, former receiver of the Boston Housing Authority

BUILDING A CO PORTFOLIO

Hyams' first major commitment of funds to support CO came in 1992, the year that violence reached epidemic proportions in many of Boston's neighborhoods. It was in that year that the foundation launched its Building Community Initiative (BCI), a multi-year effort to use CO and coalition-building as primary strategies to prevent and reduce youth violence and neighborhood crime. A four-year program that remained active for eight, Hyams invested \$2.5 million in the BCI on the premise that "grassroots organizing held the greatest promise for effectively mobilizing residents, community agencies, law enforcement and other public officials in the effort to create safe neighborhoods." Its four components included:

- **CO**, which provided the resources for grantees to hire one full-time community organizer;
- **Technical Assistance and Training**, which provided technical assistance and training to assist grantees to carry out their CO and coalition-building activities, and in raising additional funds for their work;
- **Public-Policy Advocacy**, which focused on public-policy advocacy by linking grantees together to address and act on common concerns at the city-wide level; and
- **Evaluation**, which committed funds to support an evaluation of the initiative so that its lessons could be distilled and disseminated to others interested in or engaged in similar work.

Planning for the initiative began in 1990, when discussions with Hyams grantees and media reports on escalating neighborhood violence convinced the Foundation that it should take action to address the problem. Henry Allen, recently hired as director for special projects, took the lead role, spending 50 percent of his time researching the issues and engaging in extensive conversations with Hyams grantees, crime prevention experts and funders. With a strong background in CO, Allen developed an options paper for staff discussion that outlined two strategic directions. The first was an expansion-of-services model that would have provided additional funds to community-based agencies delivering high quality services to neighborhoods afflicted with high crime rates. The second, which Allen strongly favored, was a CO model to build resident leadership and support community action strategies to prevent and reduce crime. In the end, staff and trustees endorsed Allen's approach, believing that neighborhood-based, resident-led organizing and coalition-building held the greatest

promise for responding to communities' needs for more and better services, increased program coordination, and police and criminal justice reform.

After issuing a targeted request for proposals to seven neighborhood groups, the Hyams Foundation selected and funded four coalitions, providing annual grants of between \$50,000 and \$60,000 to help them organize residents for neighborhood safety. Each grantee hired organizers to identify, develop and support community leadership; build the organization through outreach and education; assist the organization with the implementation of community-driven action plans; provide the day-to-day support necessary to nurture and sustain organizational progress; and link organizing efforts across neighborhoods and communities.

Throughout the life of the project, Foundation staff had frequent and continuous interaction with BCI grantees. Staff members made special efforts to encourage and support grantees to access technical assistance support in order to stabilize their operations and resource base. Hyams trustees also had significant interaction with BCI grantees, either through trustee site visits or through presentations that coalition staff made to the board.

DOCUMENTING BCI'S IMPACT

Committed from the start to learning from its experiences, the Hyams Foundation contracted with a team of evaluators to begin a four-year assessment of the coalitions' organizational and programmatic accomplishments. The team evaluated the coalitions along five dimensions, and found that BCI had generated results that were both significant and tangible. Foremost among them was the building and strengthening of many new relationships among neighborhood residents; between neighborhood residents and the police; and among government agencies, community-based organizations and grassroots neighborhood groups.

The evaluation noted that these relationships “are now a permanent part of a community infrastructure that can, over time, reduce neighborhood crime and violence; increase feelings of confidence, safety, and connection among residents; and further a broad community development agenda that will contribute significantly to creating and sustaining healthy, safe, and prosperous neighborhoods.”

BCI evaluators also found that, in each of the targeted neighborhoods, “the very existence of the coalition and its on-going outreach and network development served as a source of comfort, confidence, and empowerment for residents.” All of the neighborhood coalitions made progress in programmatic and organizational development terms — a significant achievement in some of the neighborhood contexts where little, if any, organizational infrastructure existed prior to BCI. Successful organizing drives were waged against drug trafficking and other criminal activities. Block associations were formed to link and inspire community residents to action. And coalitions expanded their outreach to and contacts with other groups and government agencies.

Laura Younger, the board president of one of the BCI coalitions, echoes this assessment:

Our networking has prevented the city from saying different things to different neighborhoods or blocks. By linking grassroots groups together and developing community leadership, we have been able to go beyond adversarial tactics to build new relationships based on mutual respect. That's what organizing is — being able to be at the table, and to design and implement a plan that goes beyond pathology to progress for the community.

BCI's evaluation component documented the coalitions' accomplishments and distilled lessons important for future grantmaking. Chief among them was the need to make a long-term commitment to building capacity in under-resourced communities. At least two of the BCI groups experienced significant difficulties in getting started, with one going through three community organizers in its first few years of operation. It took the careful listening and active support of Hyams staff to help the groups weather unstable staffing arrangements and other serious operational challenges.

While two of the projects eventually became less focused on organizing as a strategy, they nevertheless made important contributions to their surrounding communities. The other two groups developed strong internal organizational capacity that has enabled them to use CO to address a range of neighborhood issues. These results have underscored the Hyams trustees' original belief that not all initiatives will proceed as designed, and that true innovation requires risk-taking as well as flexibility.

The wait for results did not dampen trustee enthusiasm for organizing. The fact that many of the coalitions' achievements came in the BCI's third or fourth years underscored the point that organizing strategies require patient money and lots of support over time. The site visits that trustees made deepened their understanding of and respect for the organizing process. As Hyams' board chair, Jack Clymer, noted:

We all felt very good about BCI because it significantly improved relationships between the police and neighborhood people, and local leadership has been developed with staying power. We also saw what a long-term process organizing is. It involves placing your trust in people to decide for themselves what's important to address and act on. This is not always easy for those who have traditionally controlled the purse strings. Our experience with BCI showed us, though, that if you just stick with it long enough, positive change could happen.

Harry Spence also stated his belief that BCI reconstructed community-police relations on more positive grounds. In his view, the relationships that were built contributed to Boston's dramatic crime reduction while also helping to avoid the more draconian measures that alienated low-income communities and communities of color in other urban areas of the country.

THE FUNDED COALITIONS

CO coalitions funded by the Hyams Foundation through the Building Community Initiative.

- **Four Corners Action Coalition.** Housed at the Greenwood Memorial United Methodist Church and working with an expanded number of neighborhood groups, the Four Corners Action Coalition has achieved impressive victories in its eight-year fight for safer streets and better communities. Since 1992, it has broken up drug houses, cleaned up neighborhood streets, prevented the opening of an all-night bar, pressured public officials to repair a vital neighborhood bridge, led a community planning process for economic development in the neighborhood that may lead to significant public- and private-sector investments, and advocated for improved public transit in the area. In the process, the Coalition, staffed by an experienced community organizer, has helped new block associations to form, and supported local residents to get involved in crime watch and other community safety and renewal strategies.
- **Project R.I.G.H.T. (Restore and Improve Grove Hall Together).** With a mission to promote resident leadership and neighborhood stabilization through door-to-door organizing campaigns, Project R.I.G.H.T. has developed into a coalition of more than 25 neighborhood organizations. It helps residents organize themselves and others into block associations for community action. Through its organizing activities, Project R.I.G.H.T. has developed partnerships with the city of Boston to acquire new housing, demolish abandoned buildings, and build new schools and community centers for youth. Similarly, it has developed strong partnerships with the district attorney, the state attorney general and the Boston Police Department, all of which have resulted in more effective and respectful relationships with the community.
- **Project F.R.E.E. (Franklin Residents Efforts for Equality).** A coalition of residents in the Franklin Hill and Franklin Field public housing communities, Project F.R.E.E. works

THE FUNDED COALITIONS (continued)

with and through the Committee for Boston Public Housing to reduce crime and increase residents' sense of safety by organizing public housing tenants and youth. The Project has formed and maintained resident-led committees — first on safety, then on public housing maintenance — to develop violence-reduction strategies and improve police protection and housing authority maintenance. With substantially fewer gang-related conflicts and fewer apartment break-ins, tenants report feeling safer in their homes and community, especially at night, and are more willing to let their children play outside. One of Project F.R.E.E.'s major accomplishment has been to create a youth council that unites young people from the two developments previously divided by turf issues and related violence. The focus of Project F.R.E.E. over the past few years has been on youth leadership development and organizing.

- **Mattapan-Dorchester Churches in Action.** Mattapan Dorchester Churches in Action initially worked with Boston's Organizing Leadership Training Center to develop and implement an organizing model and anti-crime/violence prevention strategy based on a systematic process for developing congregation-based organizations dedicated to training and leadership development. The Coalition collaborated with local police and drug enforcement personnel to rid the neighborhood of drug dealers and to close down crack houses that provided an operations base for drug trafficking. Its work resulted in numerous arrests and the seizure of property identified as drug assets. Through organizing, the Coalition also secured city funds for the renovation of a local park and a decrease in the hours of service of a fast food establishment on one of the neighborhood's main commercial streets.

NEW PLANNING AND ACTION OPPORTUNITIES

The success that the Hyams Foundation had with BCI was critical to its later decision to make CO a central component of its grantmaking. Although not initially conceived as a strategy that would impact Hyams's overall grantmaking, BCI ended up having that effect. It let the Foundation experiment with funding CO on a larger and multi-year scale around an objective — increasing neighborhood safety — that all could support. It helped the Foundation build on its prior but more limited experience in funding a new approach to community change. It also exposed Foundation staff and trustees, in a much more significant way than had previous CO grants, to the CO process and its ability to leverage significant change in low-income neighborhoods. And, it generated key lessons on which the staff and trustees could build in the process of developing a new mission and grantmaking priorities.

In 1995 and 1996, the Foundation continued to organize a strategic planning process that involved both staff and trustees in significant and on-going discussions about the Foundation's history, core values, past and current strategies, and impact. With the support of Beth Smith, Hyams' executive director, staff developed a strategy to increase further Hyams' support of organizing. This strategy involved constant discussion of the issues, with key individuals taking the lead in writing and circulating position papers, conducting research, and creating regular opportunities for trustees to meet with CO groups and others knowledgeable about CO. Materials either developed or collected by staff for distribution included:

- *Community Organizing: Measuring the Impact. Key Findings from Three Studies,*
- *Reweaving the Fabric: the Iron Rule for Dealing with Poverty through Power and Politics,*
- *Grantmaking and Community Organizing: Making the System Work for Us, and*
- *What Does Hyams Mean by Community Organizing?*

In one staff position paper entitled *How CO Meets Criteria for Choosing New Funding Priorities*, Henry Allen and Enrique Ball, a program officer with prior experience in CO and leadership development, elaborated on how CO fit within the criteria that Hyams trustees established to guide their selection of new funding priorities. They pointed to the fact that a hallmark of the Foundation had always been its focus on low-income neighborhoods and that CO for the most part occurs in these communities. They also highlighted how consistent CO was with the Foundation's interest in investing in neighborhoods with less access to private and public resources. And they flagged devolution as an issue that made it all the more important to help low-income residents get organized to ensure their fair share of resources. Finally, they pointed to the fact that, because most CO groups are small, Hyams'

typical grants — ranging from \$15,000-\$30,000 at that time — could have a decisive impact on their ability to develop leaders, expand membership, engage in campaigns, and win concrete improvements for low-income families and communities.

Allen and Ball's paper also offered a definition of CO as "a process that brings together people who on a daily basis win personal battles of survival yet lack the ability or power to bring about positive change in their communities. The CO process allows people to act collectively and through an organization to bring about changes that improve the quality of life of community residents, change public policies, and nurture community leaders who represent an organized base. Successful CO brings together people of various class, race, and ethnic backgrounds to promote social change, alter the relations of power, gain social and political influence, and make demands on private and public institutions."

Given the importance of CO as a process of leadership development and resident involvement, Allen and Ball also underlined the importance of letting low-income people decide what is most important to them:

As a funder, we should not decide that Egleston Square ought to be more concerned about housing than crime, and that we will only fund one but not the other. Rather than defining the issues we will fund, we propose that we issue guidelines outlining the types of organizations we will support and what we consider to be the most effective, inclusive, and participatory form of CO.

Remembering this period of planning and discussion, Beth Smith stated:

The foundation debated whether we should fund community organizing to support change in particular issue areas. In the end, we decided not to draw any issue parameters. If it is important to low-income people, then that's our criteria for funding.

Jack Clymer agreed:

An awful lot of our funding had been organized around neighborhoods. With this as a giving focus, we came to the sense that it was not the best or wisest use of our money to force community groups to fit our funding guidelines and priorities. For me, this was personally reinforced when I would make site visits to some of the community groups we funded or were considering funding. When people described what they were trying to do, I would always come away feeling very impressed with their eloquence and intelligence. It made me believe in democracy.

Today, the major debates over organizing versus services versus advocacy have largely been resolved. Dedicated to increasing economic and social justice and power within low-income communities, the Foundation draws no issue parameters around its support for CO. Instead it favors groups that:

- Link short-term, measurable outcomes — which have an impact on the quality of life of low-income communities — with a longer-term vision;
- Show a commitment to developing new leaders and strengthening their memberships;
- Have decision-making processes that are democratic and participatory;
- Raise funds from their members and other grassroots sources; and
- Collaborate with other organizations.

Current grantees include organizations funded under the previous Hyams's guidelines, such as Massachusetts Senior Action Council, the Massachusetts Affordable Housing Alliance, Parents United for Childcare, Chinatown People Progressive Association and City Life/Vida Urbana, as well as newer grantees such as the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN), Massachusetts Jobs With Justice, Immigrant Workers Resource Center, the Boston Tenants Coalition, and Greater Boston Interfaith Organization (IAF). All of these groups have demonstrated their capacity to organize low-income people and to promote their concerns in public arenas or policymaking forums.

Between 1990 and 1999, Hyams staff estimate that grants to organizations with a significant focus on organizing almost quadrupled, from \$140,000 in 1990 to \$615,000 in 1999. The Foundation made an additional \$250,000 in grants in 1999 for public-policy advocacy, most of which included CO as a component. An additional \$470,000 was voted for leadership development programs, some of which involved low-income people in CO activities.

The Chinatown People's Progressive Association, for example, has won a series of impressive victories, defeating a proposal to build a ramp for the new artery in Chinatown, winning more than \$100,000 in back wages due immigrant restaurant workers, and supporting the formation of strong tenant unions to preserve affordable housing stock in Chinatown for current residents. ACORN successfully fought to secure a living wage of \$8.23 for hourly workers of for-profit and nonprofit organizations doing business under contract with the city of Boston. And the newly-formed Greater Boston Interfaith Organization collected more than 120,000 signatures in a petition campaign and held multiple accountability sessions with key state legislators to push for housing policy initiatives

that resulted in an increase of \$30 million in new state funds to support low-income housing development.

Since 1997, Hyams staff and trustees have continued to explore and create new CO funding opportunities. The Foundation recently commissioned new research to identify the barriers to and opportunities for increasing leadership in immigrant and refugee communities. Recognizing the serious shortage of organizers of color, it is also examining how it might best support the recruitment and retention of organizers of color. Drawing on what it learned from BCI, staff has also worked collaboratively with other funders to catalyze a new organizing initiative on behalf of school reform.

BOSTON PARENTS ORGANIZING NETWORK

The Boston Parents Organizing Network (BPON) is a new city-wide initiative to organize low-income parents and communities into a powerful force for school and education policy reform in Boston public schools. A five-year collaboration between foundations and organizing groups, BPON has been built on the premise that public schools are more accountable and effective when parents and the broader community are actively engaged in their children's education.

Initial planning for BPON started in June, 1997. On behalf of Hyams, Henry Allen and colleagues Klare Shaw from the Boston Globe Foundation and Bob Wadsworth from the Boston Foundation began meeting with CO and advocacy groups to explore options for how they might initiate an effective city-wide parent organizing effort. All agreed that:

- The Boston Public School System (BPS) was continuing to fail the majority of its students, who are predominantly low-income students of color;
- An organized parent and community constituency was an essential component in successful school reform;
- Grassroots parent and CO for the reform of individual schools was exceedingly limited, and almost no organized efforts existed at the city-wide level to hold BPS accountable for meaningful reforms; and
- Groups with a successful track record in organizing neighborhood residents — many of whom were public-school parents — could apply their experience to parent organizing for school reform.

Between June 1997 and October 1998, the idea for BPON gradually emerged. The Hyams Foundation joined one national and six local funders to create BPON as a new funding collaborative that would raise and channel resources from the philanthropic community to support grassroots organizing for school reform. Formally launched in 1999 as a five-year initiative with a budget of \$2.8 million, BPON provided six first-year grants to community organizations to build the capacity of low-income parents and community residents to effect change in their children's schools at both an individual school and system-wide level. By December 2000 two more foundations had joined, for a total of ten, and BPON had raised almost \$1.7 million. Funders to the initiative now include three national foundations (Annie E. Casey Foundation, Edward A. Hazen Foundation and the Roblee Family Foundation) and seven local foundations (Boston Globe Foundation, The Boston Foundation, the Hyams Foundation, State Street Foundation, the Schott Foundation, the United Way of Massachusetts Bay and one anonymous foundation).

BPON founders expected that in the initiative's first year (July 1, 1999 - June 30, 2000) most of the direct organizing work would take place at the local, rather than city-wide, level. The goal was to have each of the six BPON grantees identify at least one issue at the local level for an organizing campaign. With BPON now in its second year (as of July 1, 2000), the expectation is that BPON groups will begin to identify issues of common concern and coalesce around a city-wide school reform campaign. In fact, BPON has been structured to make this happen by requiring grantees to sit on BPON's steering committee and attend regular monthly meetings to facilitate information-sharing, build relationships among the groups, and identify specific systemic reform issues on which the groups might work together. A BPON coordinator, hired by the steering committee and housed at the Institute for Responsive Education, is responsible for organizing meetings, facilitating trainings, sharing information and drawing on a wide range of resource people to work with parents.

The Hyams Foundation has committed an initial \$225,000 to support BPON over the first three years, and is open to renewing its support for an additional two years at \$75,000 per year, based on progress during BPON's initial years. Committed to evaluation of the initiative, the funders also have selected an experienced team of evaluators to document BPON's progress. Similar in intent to the evaluation component of BCI, it will examine the work of BPON and its grantees over a four-year period to assess how well the initiative meets its key parent organizing and school reform objectives.

PARENT ORGANIZING GRANT RECIPIENTS

- **ACORN.** ACORN has established an education committee that has begun to identify and train parent leaders. It also has completed an extensive survey of parents in two of the school district's zones, which has identified three key issues as an initial focus to its organizing: increasing parent-teacher conference time; improving the quality of substitute teachers, and improved teaching materials and textbook availability for all students.
- **Black Ministerial Alliance.** The Black Ministerial Alliance is mobilizing and training a new generation of African American parents to become leaders in education reform in Boston. It has formed education committees in 10 of its 51-member congregations that will serve as an organizing base, and has begun training of parent leaders. It also has played a leadership role in the city on the issue of the negative impact of "high stakes testing" for students of color.
- **Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative.** DSNI is developing a shared community vision for schools in the Roxbury and Dorchester neighborhoods. It has formed an education committee whose activities include collecting data and identifying issues for short-term and long-term campaigns. Its initial focus has been on improving access to higher education for area students by advocating for improved student support services and programs to deal with the high dropout rate for minority students.
- **Greater Boston Interfaith Organization.** GBIO is focusing on leadership development through relational organizing to build power for improving the Boston public schools. It is beginning by seeking out parents who belong to member congregations, training parent leaders and conducting home meetings to identify key educational concerns. It has begun its "Thousand Conversations" campaign, which is designed to elicit the highest priority issues from among its membership. The campaign will guide its organizing and advocacy campaigns.
- **Greater Jamaica Plain Parent Organizing Project.** A collaboration between City Life/Vida Urbana, the Latino Parents Organization and the Hyde Square Task Force, this project is organizing a series of parent meetings to identify and prioritize issues and to develop campaigns to address them. Its focus is specifically on identifying and meeting the challenges to the active involvement of Latino parents. It has initially concentrated on developing a series of leadership training workshops for its constituency.
- **Parents United for Child Care.** PUCC is focusing on East Boston, working with public school parents to identify and prioritize local school issues and to develop strategies to address them. It is building on its success in other parts of the city in organizing parents to demand pre-school and after-school care in the public schools.

CONCLUSIONS

Hyams' evolution was marked by several key turning points between 1990 and 1997. They included:

- The influence of The Boston Foundation and other pioneers in funding organizing;
- The diversification of the Foundation's board;
- The hiring of program staff with significant knowledge of and experience with CO;
- The development of a major anti-violence initiative that used CO and coalition-building as primary strategies to combat and reduce youth violence and neighborhood crime; and
- A planning period characterized by intensive staff and staff-trustee interaction.

Each of these turning points opened up new possibilities, leading ultimately to a major transformation in the Foundation's funding priorities and approach that is best captured by its new mission statement: *to increase economic and social justice and power within low-income communities*. The result was that, in just a seven-year period, the Hyams Foundation moved CO from the margin to being a central component of its grantmaking programs.