power, participation, & state-based politics

An Evaluation of the Ford Foundation's Collaborations that Count Initiative

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&

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Collaborations that Count Initiative

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ARC Applied
Research
Center

introduction

In 1998, the Governance and Civil Society Unit of the Ford Foundation embarked on a six-year initiative called Collaborations That Count: Working for Democracy in Devolutionary Times, designed to encourage collaboration between civil society groups working on public policy issues in the American states. Collaborations that Count was a response to the devolution of federal funds and decision making authority to the state and local level, and in particular to three key questions highlighted by our state-level funding experience. First, our experience revealed that the groups we supported often did not work together effectively. What would it take to encourage grassroots groups, state-level policy organizations, and intermediary groups that provided resources to these organizations to develop stronger ties and coordinate their efforts?

Second, the drumbeat for smaller government that became louder during the 1990s was making it increasingly difficult for advocates of social justice to hold on to hard-won gains. Could advocates working together across their specific issue areas champion a strong role for the public sector in economic and community development, environmental preservation, social justice, and human rights?

Third, although groups working at the state level produced remarkable results with their small staff and budgets, their access to capacity building support was poor. Could increased resources for capacity building and collaboration enable state-level policy groups and community–based organizations to grow in their collective influence?

This report is the culmination of a two-year participatory evaluation process conducted by the Applied Research Center (ARC) of Oakland, California. It provides an account of the CtC experience, identifies areas in which the 11 statewide collaborations succeeded, and draws attention to ways in which support to collaboration might be more effectively provided in the future.

We are grateful to ARC as well as to our extraordinary grantees—the more than sixty organizations in eleven states, the eight national and regional partners and the scores of individuals who make up the daily lives of these institutions. Their work attests to the creativity and resilience of ordinary people struggling to achieve a society that is just, equitable and free.

MICHAEL A. EDWARDS
DIRECTOR, GOVERNANCE AND CIVIL SOCIETY
THE FORD FOUNDATION

origins of the collaborations that count initiative

*i*n Tunica, Mississippi, eight organizations worked together to block the construction of an almost exclusively white public school in the impoverished and racially divided Mississippi Delta town.

Working together to educate and organize, five Kentucky organizations forced industrial agriculture to share environmental liability with the small farmers they rely on.

With the support of three statewide organizations, workers in Bellingham, Washington won a campaign for a living wage.

In Texas, police officers must record race and ethnicity information after traffic stops in a public effort to eliminate racial profiling.

Latino and white communities in Idaho united to achieve a statewide minimum wage for farmworkers.

All of these achievements have made life better for low-income families and other vulnerable populations. They also have something else in common: they were accomplished through the work of collaborations supported by the Ford Foundation's Collaborations that Count initiative (CtC). Launched in September 1998, the Collaborations that Count initiative is an effort to bring local and statewide organizations together around common struggles for social and economic justice. This evaluation, completed five years after the initiative's inception, assesses the initiative's impact on the social change landscape and on public policies that directly affect the lives of low-income

and economically and socially vulnerable families.

COALESCING THE COLLABORATIVES

Collaborations that Count was designed by Foundation staff to encourage collaboration between civil society groups working for social and economic justice. "The original framing was to encourage grassroots organizing and popular outreach, and blend that with analysis and more focused policy work at the state level," recalls Michael Lipsky, former Ford Foundation program officer

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Former Ford Foundation Program Officer

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and one of the architects of CtC. The initiative was formed in response to three issues that the Foundation had learned from experience working in states.

While the Foundation supported projects nationwide to increase civic participation and to fight against poverty and injustice, those projects often were unable to leverage the strengths of both policy and organizing groups. Differences in resources, capabilities, and organizational cultures created divides between policy and organizing groups who were often working toward the same goals. One goal of the initiative was to bridge this divide and coordinate these efforts to achieve a greater impact.

The devolution of federal funds and decision-making authority over social programs to the states, and the rightward shift of many state governments during the 1990s, made it increasingly difficult for social justice advocates to advance policies that promoted equity and opportunity, or to hold onto hard-won gains. The Foundation's hope was that, by working in collaboration, advocates and organizers could champion a strong role for the public sector in the face of reductions in public spending.

Finally, most groups working at the state level operated with small budgets and little access to capacity-building support. Few funders supported organizational development, leadership training, fundraising, membership development, research and analysis, advocacy skills, or other capacity needs. With additional resources for capacity-building and collaboration, the Foundation hoped organizations could increase their collective influence.

Over the course of the next 6 years, the Foundation gave a total of $11 million to collaboratives, some newly formed and some pre-existing, in 11 states. The states were concentrated in

Building Capacity for Social Change
ProTex: Network for a Progressive Texas

Organizations: ProTex is comprised of 12 organizing and two policy groups. Two major coalitions organized by ProTex are the Texas Criminal Justice Reform Coalition (TCJRC) and the Texas Health Access Network (THAN).

Key Issues: Criminal Justice, Healthcare, Tax Fairness, and Fair Employment

IN 1997, progressive leaders in Texas decided to form a vehicle to promote cooperation across their organizations. ProTex was born, and after experimenting with different models, the organization decided that it would function primarily as a statewide institution that supports and coordinates the work of existing groups. ProTex assists with strategy and policy development, skills training, research assistance, leadership development, and coordination of regional and statewide gatherings. The group has successfully developed the Texas Criminal Justice Reform Coalition, which grew to include 300 organizations in its first three years of existence. The TCJRC supported public education, consensus-making, and coalition-building in support of a racial profiling bill and the Fair Defense Act, which reformed the system for appointing attorneys for low-income defendants in criminal cases. Also with the support of ProTex, a coalition of healthcare groups organized under the Texas Health Access Network achieved the simplification of the Medicaid application process.

texas

the Northwest and the South, two regions that the Ford Foundation considered to be traditionally underfunded. To be eligible for CtC funds, applicants had to demonstrate a commitment to the values of justice, equity, democracy, and inclusiveness; an organizational commitment to work in partnership; a track record of building relationships and alliances; and the ability to manage grant funds. In addition to the $11 million in direct funding to the state collaboratives,

> "Our concern is building a broad base of support for the long term. We want to build a community based on the principles of economic justice."
> —Mike Ramos,
> Washington Living Wage Movement

the Foundation granted $5.2 million to regional and national organizations to support the collaboratives directly and to engage in other state-level reforms.

WORKING FOR JUSTICE

Collaborative work in several states led to concrete policy outcomes, such as education reform in Mississippi, voter re-enfranchisement in Nevada, preservation of funding for social programs in North Carolina, and better farmworker wages in Idaho. Collaboratives have expanded their membership to include new constituencies, incubated new organizations, developed internal decision-making and resource allocation processes, and engaged in leadership training and constituent education. Most collaboratives produced research reports, garnered media attention, and/or engaged in other efforts that shifted public discourse around issues of social and economic justice.

Some state collaboratives achieved concrete policy victories, while others focused their efforts on influencing the public debate, public education, base-building, or building infrastructure. The chart on page 6 provides a snapshot of the general accomplishments of each state collaborative distilled into three categories:

- **infrastructural outcomes** within communities of grassroots and policy organizations, including new structures or processes created, and groups leaving, added to, or incubated by the collaborative;

- **developmental outcomes**, including key leadership training, expanding a group's membership, developing research and analytical frames, and constituent popular education; and

- **policy reforms**, including successfully winning new policies or modifying or blocking policies that did not advance the interests of the collaborative's constituents.

Campaigning for Economic Justice:
The Oregon Collaborative

Organizations: La CAUSA, Oregon Action, Oregon Center for Public Policy, and Rural Organizing Project. New Members: VOZ, Ecumenical Ministries, Eugene-Springfield Solidarity Network, and Portland Jobs With Justice.

Key Issues: Food Stamp Reform, Workers' Rights, Immigrant Rights, and Tax and Budget Justice

THE OREGON COLLABORATIVE, now known as the Oregon Campaign for Economic Justice, launched a food stamp campaign that successfully simplified the application process, extended eligibility to thousands of residents, restored benefits to immigrants, and exempted all childless adults from punitive food stamp time limits. Between 1997 and 2002, while national food stamp enrollment decreased by 3.3 percent, participation in Oregon burgeoned by 56 percent, the highest growth rate in the country. The four partners in the collaborative had complementary skills and constituencies, and "you can distinguish each organization's contributions to the larger victory," says Oregon Action board member Ruth Anderson. The work in Oregon informed national efforts to increase access to food stamps, as regional and national organizations such as the Northwest Federation of Community Organizations and the National Campaign for Jobs and Income Support were able to point to Oregon as a model for how to ease state reporting requirements.

oregon

Outcomes of State-Based Collaborative Work

STATE	INFRASTRUCTURE OUTCOMES	DEVELOPMENTAL OUTCOMES	
AL	• Incubated new organization: Campaign for a New South • Created internal accountability processes	• Formally added popular education, media and power analysis to Grassroots Leadership Development Training program • Conducted workshops to recruit key allies	
ID	• Incubated new organizations: Idahoans for Fair Elections, Idaho Interfaith Alliance, Idaho Progressive Student Association, Fund for Idaho	• Conducted anti-racist trainings, issue education, and leadership development • Strengthened partnerships with Latino community	
KY	• Developed process to articulate vision/mission, primary strategies, secondary strategies, job descriptions for partner organizations, and budget allocations	• Hosted conferences on economic justice • Held media trainings for constituents • Developed educational materials	
MS	• Helped form Citizens for Quality Special Education, a group focusing on disability issues • Formed multi-issue Rural Education Working Group	• Built a network of grassroots Black leaders • Developed accountability measures for Black public officials • Delivered issue, theory, and organizing training	
NV	• Established the Nevada Young Activists Project, Nevada Conservation League, Nevada Empowered Women's Project, Latinos For Political Education	• Participated in dismantling racism trainings • Participated in media trainings	
NC	• Provided technological support for member groups • Developed website, database, email, and mailing list in order to expand distribution and mobilization capacities	• Co-sponsored capacity-building workshop • Sponsored Living Wage Conference • Co-sponsored Women's Advocacy Day	
OR	• Added one faith-based organization, two labor/community coalitions, and one day labor organization	• Held cross-constituency issue education workshops • Created joint-membership congress and 2003 issue agenda	
SC	• Established organization development funds for groups • Expanded to include Latinos and youth groups	• Strengthened presence in 26 targeted counties • Trained 6 grassroots leaders on GIS and redistricting demography	
TN	• Expanded leadership roles of people of color • Provided technology support for groups and low-income leaders	• Participated in dismantling racism workshops • Held regional power-building meetings • Conducted trainings on tax reform and healthcare	
TX	• Changed structure from regional to state-wide, issue-based coalitions focusing on: criminal justice, healthcare, tax fairness, and fair employment	• Popular education trainings focused on tax fairness • Sponsored annual statewide conference	
WA	• Formation of WA tax fairness coalition (over 70 organizations) • Created statewide poverty action network	• Increased low-income constituent participation • Held over 100 workshops on tax fairness • Developed local living wage committees	

- State felony re-enfranchisement reform
- Collaborative's tax reform principles moved front and center in state legislature

- Farmworker minimum wage and labor contract bonding reforms
- Increased access to healthcare and childcare

- Integrator liability regulations to require industrial agriculture to share environmental responsibility with small farmers

- Funding for Mississippi Adequate Education Program
- Investigation of discipline policies and increased training of "special needs" teachers
- Blocked construction of virtually all-white public school

- Employment non-discrimination reform
- Voting rights for ex-felons restored
- Budget increases for basic human services

- Budget cuts to social programs were limited

- Food stamp program reform: eligibility levels raised, time limits exempted for labor surplus areas, application process simplified

- Defended rights of 1.4 million workers against unlawful workplace termination

- Prevented increase in sales tax on food
- Minimized restrictions in healthcare access and cuts in benefits

- Racial profiling reforms
- Medicaid application process simplified

- Local living wage ordinance in Bellingham
- Family care package passed
- State minimum wage preserved

*Foundation funds were not used for direct or indirect legislative activity. Funds could be used for:

- Public communications that did not explicitly or implicitly encourage people to contact elected officials.

- Advocacy campaigns that focused on non-legislative issues, such as an administrative rule change or a lawsuit.

- Media work that did not encourage people to contact elected officials (e.g. press releases, op-eds, letters to the editor).

- Substantive reports that fully discussed one or more legislative proposals and that did not explicitly encourage people to contact elected officials.

- Issue education for public officials that did not discuss a specific legislative proposal, such as a paper or briefing.

analytical frame

Collaborative efforts have been waged in the face of an often hostile political and economic climate. The economic downturn that began in 2001, the crisis of September 11, and a consolidation of conservative power have affected the work of collaboratives in each state differently. Yet while numerous lessons can be learned from exploring each state's accomplishments, six key factors contributed most significantly to the trajectory of a collaborative:

1. The level and intensity of established **prior relationships** among collaborative groups before the start of the Ford Foundation initiative;

2. Different articulations of a shared **political vision**;

3. Collaboratives' ability to negotiate **power dynamics** among groups and individuals;

4. **Internal processes** that affect external outcomes;

5. **Campaign leadership** that affects policy outcomes; and

6. **Stages of collaborative development** that affect strategies and allocation of resources.

An analysis of these six evaluative variables reveals key lessons for collaboratives and grantmakers as they consider engaging in or supporting ongoing or future collaborations of this kind.

Building a Shared Analysis:
The Kentucky Economic Justice Alliance (KEJA)

Organizations: Appalshop, Community Farm Alliance, Democracy Resource Center, the Kentucky Coalition, and Kentucky Youth Advocates.

Key Issues: Industrial Agriculture, State Fiscal Policy, and Tax Reform

KEJA'S most important contribution to social change in Kentucky has been in shifting the debate around economic justice issues. One of KEJA's primary issues was industrial agriculture, a burgeoning industry in the state that is responsible for low-wage, high-risk employment, particularly in chicken plants and hog farms. "Not only were we seeing the development of this corporate agriculture infrastructure that was devastating small towns and small family farms, but we were paying for it," says Burt Lauderdale of the Kentucky Coalition. "We were giving money to corporations to come in and do that to us." Corporate tax incentives have contributed to a proliferation of food processing plants and their low-wage and high-risk jobs. The hardship created by low wages is compounded by working conditions that are responsible for numerous deaths each year." We need to effectively approach the question, 'What would it take to really deal with the threat of corporate agriculture and really maintain the culture of small farmers?'" says Lauderdale. This question pushed KEJA toward a broader analysis of economic development policy in the state. KEJA hosted conferences and produced a report titled Kentucky's Low Road to Economic Development, which explores the use of tax incentives in the state. "I think that's been our biggest success," according to Debra Miller of Kentucky Youth Advocates. "While we may have different interpretations of where the governor came from on economic development, we certainly shaped the debate and helped to set the context."

kentucky

PRIOR RELATIONSHIPS

The starting points for some of the collaboratives were rooted in more than five years of work prior to their CtC funding in 1998. For others, 1998 marked the first opportunity for the participating organizations to begin to think together about advancing collective work. In some states, all collaborative partners were already working jointly on a campaign or were already engaged in formal collaboration. Other states were bringing together groups that had not worked together formally, and still others used the initiative to advance the development of a formal institution. In addition, several collaboratives were involved in the complicated process of expanding their constituent base to include strategic partners and organizations that represent marginalized communities.

KEY LESSONS

- **The status of prior relationships among collaborative partners was the strongest indicator of the types of activities that collaboratives focused on during the Collaborations that Count program.** States where groups had already worked together collaboratively were able to focus their efforts toward specific internal or external results, while states that coalesced less familiar partners spent more time on relationship and capacity building, internal processes, developing a joint vision, and addressing intergroup power dynamics.

- **Prior relationships should be a consideration in, but not a prerequisite for, determining collaborative membership.** While collaboratives with significant prior relationships tended to have more external success, basing collaborative membership solely on this factor may diminish the importance of other criteria, such as building new strategic alliances and reaching out to new constituencies.

Building on Prior Relationships:
The Washington Living Wage Movement

Organizations: Washington Association of Churches, Washington Citizen Action, and Washington State Labor Association.

Key Issues: Economic Justice, Farmworker Housing, and Labor Issues

"The collaboration of our groups is based on pre-existing relationships. But, before the collaborative was formed, we worked on a reactive basis to prevent bad things from happening. As a result of the collaborative, we come together around common principles. It's an opportunity to think and act proactively."
Barbara Flye, Washington Citizen Action

THE SKILLFUL interplay of the organizations comprising the Washington Living Wage Movement has led to victories at the state and local level on economic and social issues. The Living Wage Movement successfully defended the state minimum wage package from three separate attempts to exempt agricultural workers, tipped workers, and youth. The collaborative also supported Washington farmworkers through 22 strikes during the 2002 apple harvest, which led to six wage increases. The Living Wage Movement's Fair Trade Apple Campaign secured an agreement with growers and fair trade apple producers to market fair trade apples in a number of organic supermarkets. Meanwhile, the collaborative helped win budget increases for farmworker housing, and led a successful campaign to pass a Family Care Package that gives workers time off to care for their sick adult relatives, not just children. "Our concern is building a base of support for the long term," says Mike Ramos of the Washington Association of Churches. "We want to build a community based on the principles of economic justice."

washington

POLITICAL VISION

Collaboratives had to consolidate a political vision and implement a plan of action across the staff and leadership of organizations, as well as their constituencies and members. Political vision includes: (a) a common political analysis of the problems, opportunities, and challenges that groups face; (b) a shared vision of solutions and changes that groups want in both the short and long term, and a concrete sense of how the groups' efforts will achieve them; and (c) the ability to ground the shared analysis and vision for the future in the experiences of the constituent members of the collaborative, and then to communicate them effectively to potential allies and the broader public. Some groups had formally defined, written platforms outlining their goals, others wrote sophisticated analyses of problems and opportunities, and most grappled with ways to ground the analysis and vision in the experiences of their constituents.

KEY LESSONS

- **Developing a political vision that is shared among groups is a necessary component of long-term collaborative work.** As they move beyond short-term campaigns, collaboratives will inevitably have to face the question: "Power for whom and for what?" Developing a political vision that answers this question is necessary for building long-term power.

- **Cross-organizational education and constituent consolidation are important prerequisites to collective action.** While many collaborative efforts are primarily driven by relationships among the staff of partner organizations, the capacity to build statewide power and influence issue debates depends, at least in part, on the ability to mobilize a significant base unified by a joint vision. This requires developing education programs that will be effective across diverse constituencies.

Building a Vision for Education Equity:
The Mississippi Education Working Group (MEWG)

Organizations: Citizens for Quality Education, Concerned Citizens for a Better Tunica County Drew Community Voters League, Indianola Parent Student Group, Southern Echo, and Tallahatchie Housing, Inc.
Key Issues: Anti-racist work focusing on education and environmental issues

AT BOTH the local and statewide levels, MEWG has developed, advocated for, and won alternative policy proposals on public education. In 1997, the Mississippi legislature passed the Mississippi Adequate Education Program, which appropriated $1.2 billion over five years to improve land, buildings, technology, textbooks, and teacher salaries. The prioritization of education spending was in large part a result of the organizing and education work of MEWG. In 2000, the legislature passed school accountability legislation that included provisions on parental and community involvement, which were proposed and drafted by MEWG in response to requests from the State Department of Education and the Senate Education Committee.

MEWG is committed to developing indigenous leadership within the African American community and building the power of local organizations. Southern Echo training director Mike Sayer reports, "As had always been projected in our experiment, some of the older groups are now also providing training and technical assistance to other member groups and to outside organizations." For example, by supporting each other on local campaigns, MEWG was able to assist Concerned Citizens for a Better Tunica County in blocking the state's creation of a virtually all-white elementary school. MEWG has also formed a new statewide organization to advocate for quality special education and forced a comprehensive investigation of discipline policies and practices in the Drew school district. In 2000, MEWG worked with African American parents' groups in Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, and North Carolina to form the Rural Education Working Group, modeled after MEWG.

mississippi

POWER DYNAMICS

Even with an alignment of social change goals, collaboratives must often negotiate complex internal power dynamics. Collaboratives had to bridge differences related to the race, class, and gender composition of the leadership and/or constituencies of partner organizations. Other dynamics include the differing cultural and political practices, resources, and standards of accountability that diverse organizations—especially policy groups versus grassroots organizations—bring to the collaboration. These dynamics emerge at numerous points during collaborative development, particularly when facing questions of resource allocation, collaborative structure, decision-making power, issue and strategy selection, relationships to funders, and the inclusion or exclusion of different groups or constituencies.

KEY LESSONS

- **Race matters.** Issues of race and racism affected each of the collaboratives. Involving strong organizations of people of color at the beginning of a collaborative initiative does not necessarily ensure that the collaborative will be hospitable to the interests and issues of people of color. However, not doing so will guarantee future difficulties in building relationships with communities of color. Although dismantling racism training workshops can lead to internal conflict—as experiences in Idaho, Nevada, and Tennessee illustrate—collaboratives that engaged in such trainings developed processes to minimize the tokenization or marginalization of people of color within the collaborative.

- **To build successful collaborations of policy and organizing groups, it is necessary to bridge organizational cultures and address differences in organizational self-interest.** Organizing and policy groups bring different capacities to social change work, which can be leveraged to shift state-level policy debates. At the same time, differences in primary constituencies, measures of success, decision-making structures, and resources between organizational types can pose challenges for collaboration.

Engaging New Constituencies:
South Carolina Policy and Organizing Project (SCPOP)

Organizations: Carolina Alliance for Fair Employment, Movement of the People, and South Carolina Environmental Watch (Former Members: South Carolina Fair Share and South Carolina United Action).

Key Issues: Redistricting and Local Issue Development

FROM the start, SCPOP intended to develop a grassroots network at the county level by bringing in groups that had not previously been involved in policy work. As in regions throughout the South, the population of Latinos in South Carolina has grown faster than the political and social services infrastructure that supports it. SCPOP commissioned a research project with Deborah Para-Medina at the University of South Carolina to document the Latino community's demographics, key issues, and organizations. This led to the formation of a strategic relationship with the Hispanic Outreach Center, based in Columbia but with a statewide reach. "SCPOP has empowered and educated the Hispanic community," observes Marcelo Lopes of the Hispanic Outreach Center, "to become more knowledgeable of the political process by including Hispanic members in redistricting and voter education trainings." Greater appreciation of, and commitment to, the involvement of Latinos has led SCPOP to hold bilingual meetings in some counties. Much of SCPOP's materials are translated into Spanish as well, including a pamphlet entitled "Knowing Your Rights If You Are Stopped by the Police, FBI, and INS." SCPOP and Hispanic Outreach continue to co-sponsor workshops on domestic violence, employment issues, and redistricting. In August 2002, SCPOP invited Carolina Zaragoza from the Mexican Consulate to engage the community on issues of employment, worker rights, education, and redistricting. More than 2,500 Latinos attended the event in Charleston, traveling from as far as Georgia, Tennessee, and North Carolina.

south carolina

INTERNAL PROCESSES

Collaboratives developed processes for working together and transforming internal work into external results. Some groups developed formal internal processes to facilitate decision-making and maintain accountability to collaborative work, while other collaborative processes consisted of informal communication among organizational leaders. Despite this variation, all collaboratives addressed how to allocate resources, maintain accountability, and establish a division of labor. At the same time, they had to find a balance between focusing on internal process and working for external outcomes.

KEY LESSONS

- **There are limits to what transparent and democratic internal processes can do.** Internal processes are important for including voices that are not usually heard, developing leadership, and proactively addressing power imbalances among organizations and individuals. Yet they cannot transcend real differences in power and capacity, nor can they guarantee more effective campaign work.

- **The role of the lead organization raised unique process issues.** The Ford Foundation chose one group in each state as a lead organization. There was wide variation in the types of lead organizations, their experience in managing this type of project, and their financial capacity. However, there was the perception among groups in some state collaboratives that lead organizations had more capacity, in addition to the reality that lead organizations had more interaction with the Foundation. When a lead organization is perceived as having a greater capacity than the member organizations, there are heightened expectations of its role and responsibilities, which in turn can shift the perceived locus of power and accountability in a collaborative.

- **Internal processes are also affected by leadership transitions.** Changes in collaborative leadership often lead to a realignment of relationships among member organizations, which can affect collaborative processes and outcomes.

"Going Deep and Wide:"
The Alabama Organizing Project
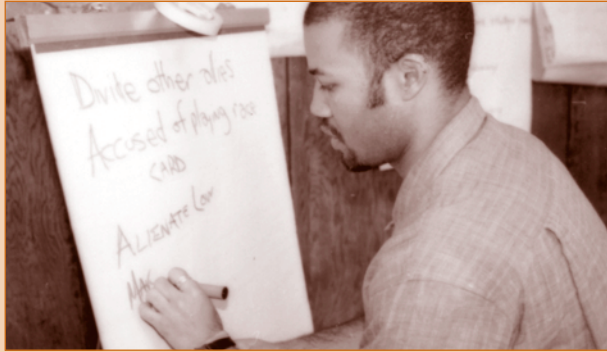
Organizations: Alabama Coalition Against Hunger, Arise Citizens' Policy Project, Campaign for a New South, Federation of Child-Care Centers of Alabama, Federation of Southern Cooperatives, and Greater Birmingham Ministries.

Key Issues: Welfare Reform and Tax Justice

IN THE conservative political landscape of present-day Alabama, AOP has been successful in developing the skills and analysis of leaders and organizers to influence the terms of policy debates. The collaborative's emphasis—"going deep" within the constituent base and staff of participating organizations, and then "going wide" to influence key players and policy decision-makers—has been effective in holding the line against potentially harmful legislation, while also proposing progressive policy alternatives. Through its Grassroots Leadership Development program, AOP has helped individuals learn new skills that will enable them to become more effective leaders in their communities. "Having organizers at each of the groups and getting them to work together is at the very heart of what we are doing," says Toni Small of the Alabama New South Coalition. Over the past five years, over 150 participants from across the state have undergone eight to 12 days of training in advocacy and the legislative process, media work, and addressing racism and internalized oppression.

AOP's internal strategy serves its external policy agenda. Over the last six years, AOP has convened key players around the state—community organizations, congregation-based groups, policymakers, and others—for a "Quality of Life" Day. This event brings together a broad cross-section of Alabamians to focus on a variety of issues—such as education, tax reform, environment, employment, and healthcare—and expose them to AOP's analysis and strategies in dealing with these important policy agendas.

alabama

CAMPAIGN STRATEGY AND LEADERSHIP

Campaign strategy is the ability to plan and implement a concrete set of activities to realize a specific goal. Such an organizing plan includes goal setting, strategizing, and collective activities based on a division of labor and mutual accountability. Campaign strategy also includes an analysis of political opportunities, potential allies, and opposition; alternative policy development; and a plan for shifting the public discussion of an issue to support the collaborative's goals. Campaign leadership is the ability to carry out the campaign strategy, make periodic assessments, and adjust the strategy to respond to shifting political terrain, if needed.

KEY LESSONS

- **Campaign strategy and issue framing are closely connected to policy outcomes.** Campaign strategies were most effective when they were able to leverage the strengths of allies, frame issues to mobilize key constituencies, and shift public debate.

- **Collaboratives that frame campaign objectives in terms of racial justice have achieved significant policy reforms that benefited both people of color and broad segments of the general population.** Collaborative campaigns demonstrated that racial justice framing can be effective even in predominantly white states where there are few organizations of people of color, and can help build a constituency base of people of color, develop white organizational allies, and shift the organizational political vision.

- **Building progressive infrastructure is an extension of an intentional and strategic process.** To implement their campaigns and advance their goals, collaboratives found they had to address gaps in their infrastructure. Collaboratives in Alabama, Idaho, Mississippi, Washington, and Nevada incubated new organizations or coalitions, while collaboratives in Oregon, South Carolina, and Texas reached out to identify and involve new constituencies.

Campaign Strategy:
The Idaho Collaborative

Organizations: Idaho Community Action Network, Idaho Women's Network, and United Vision for Idaho.

Key Issues: Farmworker Minimum Wage, Immigrant Rights, Healthcare Access, State Spending Priorities

WHEN Latino leaders from across the state of Idaho chose a farmworker minimum wage as their top priority, leaders of the Idaho Collaborative saw it as an opportunity to build ties with immigrant communities and to demonstrate their commitment to racial justice. Building on its growing base in the Latino community, the Idaho Community Action Network (ICAN) organized hundreds of farmworkers to be active in the campaign. "ICAN played a strong role in providing testimony," says Adan Ramirez. "We organized the real folks who could not speak English but wanted to tell their stories. What made the difference in the campaign was that farmworkers had the courage to go to the capitol and speak out." Roger Sherman of United Vision for Idaho recounts, "Support for the campaign was widespread. There were countless people writing letters, calling legislators, and fasting, including many who we had never organized." After a final series of actions held in Boise in early 2001, the legislature passed one of the strongest farmworker minimum wage laws in the nation. Humberto Fuentes, former Executive Director of the Idaho Migrant Council, notes that, "When we saw how committed these organizations were by going through the dismantling racism work, we knew we could count on them as real allies."

idaho

STAGES OF COLLABORATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Although collaboratives are dynamic entities, responsive to both their internal membership needs and the external political environment, they nonetheless advance through predictable stages. Examining these stages points to a number of lessons:

KEY LESSONS

- **Accurate assessments of the external environment and internal capacities are vital.** Regardless of the stage of development, accurate assessments of (1) the state's political environment, and (2) the resources that potential collaborative partners bring to the table are important developmental prerequisites.

- **Learning about development stages and processes may enhance internal cohesion and external outcomes.** A good road map addressing stages of collaborative development can be a useful planning tool. This base of knowledge can help groups anticipate key questions, investigate potential responses, and define desired outcomes.

PHASE	KEY TASKS
PHASE 1 Conceptualize and Commence	• Assess external environment • Create shared visions, goals, and anticipated outcomes • Assess and recruit key stakeholders
PHASE 2 Devise, Develop, and Do	• Secure resources and staffing • Develop program and decision-making structures • Design pilot activities
PHASE 3 Examine and Evaluate	• Assess approach, division of labor, and participant mix • Explore areas of conflict/tension • Reexamine goals and outcomes
PHASE 4 Refine, Readjust, and Reinforce	• Refine systems • Readjust decision-making structures • Reinforce all successful work
PHASE 5 Institutionalize or Integrate	• Evaluate overall effort • Institutionalize collaborative OR • Integrate functions into existing organizations

Developing an Effective Organization:
Progressive Leadership Alliance of Nevada (PLAN)

Organizations: PLAN is an established statewide progressive coalition of 42 community organizing, policy, and smaller coalition-based organizations.

Key Issues: Economic, Environmental and Racial Justice, and Human Rights

SINCE its inception in 1994, PLAN has progressed through various stages to become the leader for progressive change in Nevada. From its inception, the organization has provided leadership, as well as research and education, on economic and social justice issues. "When PLAN was first starting out, I felt relieved that someone was going to take on hard issues such as welfare, poverty, and gay and lesbian rights," says Grace Thornton-Portorti of the Nevada Conservation League. PLAN has since grown to focus on five issues areas, including economic justice, environmental justice, racial justice, human rights, and development of young activists. PLAN has not shied away from controversy or divisive issues. PLAN's successes at the policy level include prohibiting workplace discrimination based on sexual identity, restoring voting rights for felons, stopping an English-Only bill from getting to a vote, increasing state funding for human services, requiring utilities to buy 15 percent of generated power from renewable resources, and securing funding for an AIDS Drug Assistance Program.

nevada

ancillary organizations

*i*n addition to providing direct support to state-based collaboratives, the Ford Foundation provided $5.2 million to support the work of eight "ancillary grantees." These funds were provided to ancillary organizations to support both direct work with CtC grantees and the broader objective of strengthening the infrastructure for state-level work.

- Alliance for Justice provided technical assistance to grantees on laws governing nonprofits.

- Center for Policy Alternatives received support to link public policy leaders with community based organizations.

- Creative Communications provided independent news services.

- Economic Policy Institute received support for the Economic Analysis Research Network.

- Northwest Federation of Community Organizations supported training, capacity-building, and research activities.

- Progressive Technology Project provided technical assistance and increased technology capacity.

- Southern Partners Fund convened and coordinated organizational development training sessions.

- Western States Center promoted civic participation and provided training and technical assistance.

Educating Constituents and Building Skills: Tennessee Partnership on Organizing and Public Policy (TPOPP)

Organizations: Just Organized Neighborhood Area Headquarters, MANNA, Save Our Cumberland Mountains, Solutions to Issues of Concern to Knoxvillians, Tennessee Industrial Renewal Network, Tennessee Health Care Campaign, Tennessee Citizens' Alliance, Tennesseans for Fair Taxation, and Tennessee Justice Center.

Key Issues: Tax Reform and Healthcare.

IN ITS continuing efforts to preserve healthcare benefits and secure an income tax, TPOPP's accomplishments and potential stem largely from the strengthened relationships between groups with policy expertise and organizing groups. TPOPP worked with Tennesseans for Fair Taxation and the Tennessee Health Care Campaign to produce simplified educational materials and training sessions on tax reform and TennCare. These were distributed among the partners and shared with membership. "What TPOPP has been able to do is to break down some of these complex issues into language and messages that all of the people who are affected by them can understand and organize around," says Carolyn Washington of MANNA. "This has been enormously helpful to our organization and to many of the others." TPOPP's partner organizations have made commitments to educate their board members and constituents. "TPOPP has helped us organize regional and county-wide meetings around tax reform and TennCare," notes Tony Garr of the Tennessee Health Care Campaign. As part of that process, TPOPP held a series of power-building convenings throughout the state. "We are doing something that both grassroots people and policy people need and no one else is doing—skill development and issue education of members," adds former TPOPP coordinator Susie Putz-Drury.

tennessee

SUPPORTING COLLABORATIVES WITH TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

The Foundation directed one-third of the CtC initiative money to eight ancillary grantees to support direct work with CtC grantees and the broader objective of strengthening the infrastructure for state-level work.

KEY LESSONS

- **Developing a systematic and coordinated approach to the delivery of ancillary services may increase effectiveness.** This approach would include: (1) ongoing assessment to ensure that services match needs, (2) opportunities for feedback, and (3) coordination from a person or entity that understands the needs of local groups.

- **Assistance does not only mean the provision or transference of technical skills.** For relationships between providers and recipients to be productive, either the values or cultures of both organizations must be similar, or both the provider and the recipient of assistance must have a clear sense of what is needed and a defined system of communication and accountability.

- **Collaboratives have a sense of their own developmental needs.** The Ford Foundation's selection of ancillary organizations often preceded a complete assessment of all state collaboratives, and as a result the assistance available for collaboratives often did not match their needs. Interaction between an ancillary grantee and a state collaborative was most effective when either a prior, ongoing relationship existed or when the assistance overlapped with or emerged from a specific need of a particular collaborative.

Changing the Message:
North Carolina Alliance for Economic Justice (NCAEJ)

Organizations: North Carolina Council of Churches, North Carolina Community Development Association, Common Sense Foundation, North Carolina Fair Share, North Carolina Justice & Community Development Center, and Southerners for Economic Justice (Former Members: Institute for Southern Studies, Jubilee, and North Carolina Equity).

Key Issues: Living Income and Preventing Budget Cuts in Key Social Programs

WHEN the recession hit North Carolina, the initial response at the capitol was to cut programs and services that were vital to the state's low income residents. "There had been all this noise about cutting taxes," says Chris Fitzsimon of the Common Sense Foundation, "but we were saying 'no.' We need taxes because we need programs." To fight against cuts to social services and other programs, NCAEJ organized its biggest and most successful event—a dinner, followed by a march, rally, and demonstration—on the convening day of the state General Assembly. More than 250 people marched to the legislature. "It was a very diverse group of people, from activists and grassroots people to professionals, students, everyone who was going to be affected by the budget cuts," recalls George Reed of the Council of Churches. The rally helped put pressure on the legislature to consider the impact of budget cuts on low-income families. It also captured the attention of the media. "The news coverage was very positive," according to Marie Hill-Faison of SEJ, "especially considering no one had been talking about anything except September 11 and Afghanistan." The rally brought together a unified voice in defense of critical programs and services at a critical time. "The budget ended up being not as bad as it could have been," says Fitzsimon. "North Carolina was one of the few states in the country that decided to raise taxes to pay for services."

north carolina

the foundation's role

*f*unding for CtC was actually a significant stretch. Not only was Ford bypassing the normal either/or approach to funding policy and grassroots groups, but the both/and method chosen by Ford staff held possibilities for being more successful and more unpredictable. Thus, CtC was a truly innovative experiment.

The Foundation staff played a significant role in guiding the initiative, and their involvement was particularly critical in the following four areas: the structuring of the CtC initiative; funder/grantee relations; establishing parameters for the allocation of resources; and developing guidelines on the use of initiative resources for lobbying purposes. The Foundation's involvement had a significant impact on the structure of collaboratives. The Foundation stressed the importance of involving multiracial and multi-issue constituencies, which resulted in the involvement of a diverse constituency in nine of the 11 states; encouraged collaboration between grassroots and policy organizations; and sought out strong grassroots groups to anchor many of the collaboratives, which mitigated power struggles between organizational types.

KEY LESSONS

- **Power relations are always an underlying factor in interactions between funders and grantees, affecting a collaborative's actions and decisions.** To mitigate this dynamic, Ford allowed states broad flexibility in determining both the structure of the collaboratives and the issues they worked on, and the Foundation provided six years of continued funding.

- **Restrictive language in prohibiting the use of grant money for lobbying purposes imposed an undue burden on collaboratives.** The Ford Foundation's general restrictions on lobbying activity are stricter than those imposed upon 501(c)(3) organizations by the IRS.

- **Providing multi-year funding was crucial to the successes of state collaborative efforts.** This long-term commitment allowed states to shore up collaborative processes and relationships, take risks and adopt innovative new approaches, and launch successful issue campaigns.

recommendations

1. **Articulate clear goals, standards, and expectations for the collaborative and periodically assess them.** These should include criteria and goals for strategic expansion.

2. **Do not accept funding for collaboration if the primary need of collaborating groups is to support their existing work and/or develop their own infrastructure.** Collaborative work can impose unexpected demands on staff time and organizational resources.

3. **Ensure that organizations of people of color are involved** as core organizations from the beginning of a collaboration. This avoids the pitfalls inherent in trying to integrate a collaborative at a later stage of development.

4. **Conduct joint campaign work** regularly throughout the collaborative organizing effort. The activities of external campaign work can achieve external results while strengthening relationships among collaborative partners.

5. **Ensure that internal processes, such as leadership development, broadening the constituency, and developing a political vision, build toward external outcomes.**

6. **Develop a joint vision statement.** The collaborative should also create a formal mechanism for both new and old groups to review, revise, and recommit to the vision statement.

7. **Work to identify, surface, and address unequal power dynamics, both internally in terms of group process and externally in terms of partner and issue selection.**

8. **Allocate time and resources for cross-constituent education.** The success of campaigns may depend on cross-constituent education and consolidation.

9. **Develop internal technical assistance plans for the collaborative and its participating organizations as part of ongoing organizational development work.**

10. **Revisit and reassess the collaborative's allocation of resources at every stage of development.** Changes in the external political environment and/or key staff, the growth or contraction of the membership base, and the group's visibility and ability to achieve success may require different approaches.

1. **Articulate clear standards and expectations for collaborative work.**

2. **Increase foundation support and provide multi-year funding for state-level organizing and policy work.**

3. **Expose new collaborative partners to successful models of collaboration.** Past models and the lessons learned from those experiences can inform the structure and expectations of new initiatives.

4. **Require groups to follow the current laws and guidelines for lobbying restrictions, but do not limit unnecessarily their ability to engage in educational and lobbying activities any more than current IRS regulations require.**

5. **Establish regional and national issue foci.** Inter-state training focused on responses to issue trends (such as tax reform and racial profiling) can help organizations select and frame issues, develop research, and build national momentum around messages and campaigns.

6. **Support the efforts of collaboratives to build a joint political vision.** Consider the development of a political vision and the necessary internal cross-constituency educational efforts a product on par with "institutional change."

7. **Support training and technical assistance to help groups on issue framing, campaign strategy development, and addressing internal racial dynamics and external issues of racial justice.** Create opportunities for grantees to develop a plan to obtain ancillary services and technical assistance.

8. **Support the establishment of a national infrastructure that can meet the policy needs of community organizations.**

9. **Establish a series of mechanisms to help elicit feedback and concerns from grantees.** Contract with an independent intermediary to assist in communications, help organize and facilitate gatherings, conduct collaborative assessments, and help collaboratives to develop peer cross trainings.

10. **Prioritize ongoing assessments over project-end evaluations to examine collaborative progress and challenges.** Ongoing evaluation could provide prescriptive assessments that could enhance collaborative outcomes. Earmark funding to support participation in assessments and evaluation processes.

FORD COLLABORATIONS THAT COUNT STATE COLLABORATIONS

ALABAMA
Alabama Organizing Project
c/o Greater Birmingham Ministries
2304 12th Ave, North
Birmingham, AL 35234-3111
205-326-6821
www.gbm.org

IDAHO
The Idaho Collaborative
c/o United Vision for Idaho
1412 W. Idaho, Ste. 100
Boise, ID 83702
208-331-7028
www.uvidaho.org

KENTUCKY
Kentucky Economic Justice Alliance
c/o The Kentucky Coalition
PO Box 1450
London, KY 40743
606-878-2161
www.kftc.org

MISSISSIPPI
Mississippi Education Working Group
c/o Southern Echo
PO Box 2450
Jackson, MS 39225
601-352-1500
Souecho@bellsouth.net

NEVADA
Progressive Leadership Alliance of Nevada
1101 Riverside Drive
Reno, NV 89503
775-348-7557
www.planevada.org

NORTH CAROLINA
North Carolina Alliance
for Economic Justice
3824 Barrett Drive, Ste. 312
Raleigh, NC 27609
919-856-2169
www.ncaej.org

OREGON
The Oregon Collaborative
c/o Rural Organizing Project
PO Box 1350
Scappoose, OR 97056-1350
503-543-8417
www.rop.org

SOUTH CAROLINA
South Carolina Policy and
Organizing Project
c/o Carolina Alliance for Fair Employment
1 Chick Springs Road, Ste. 110-B
Greenville, SC 29609
864-370-5447
www.cafesc.org

TENNESSEE
Tennessee Partnership on Organizing
and Public Policy
c/o Save Our Cumberland Mountains
PO Box 479
Lake City, TN 37769
931-380-1175
www.socm.org

TEXAS
ProTex: Network for a Progressive Texas
1506 S. 1st Street
Austin, TX 78704
512-441-3003
www.protex.org

WASHINGTON
Washington Living Wage Movement
c/o Washington Assoc. of Churches
419 Occidental Ave., South, Ste. 201
Seattle, WA 98104-2886
206-625-9790
www.thewac.org