



REFLECTIONS

on Making Connections

The Transition to Local Management in *Making Connections*

An Interim Report

What happens when a multi-site initiative that has been led by a mix of the funder's staff, local "site coordinators," local partners and residents decides that, to sustain the work for the long-term, it must find a local organization to manage the work on the ground?

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About this report

This report is based on interviews of 36 people involved in the process of transitioning management of *Making Connections* sites to Local Management Entities. These interviews were conducted between May 2007 and January 2008. This interim report was completed in February 2008. It is an interim report because the LME transition process is still going on in many sites; diarists will continue to follow this process as LMEs take on their management roles in 2008.

Those interviewed included 11 residents, 13 partners, six Local Site Coordinators or Site Team Leaders, four site staff members and two Local Learning partners. Of the 36 people interviewed, 34 allowed us to use their names.

The diarists recorded their interviews and produced edited transcripts. These transcripts are seen as a form of data, which is why many quotes from these transcripts are used in this report. The diarists see their role as primarily giving voice to—and learning from—the people who are doing the *Making Connections* work day to day.

The Transition to Local Management in *Making Connections*

AN INTERIM REPORT

**Reflections on an “intensive, time consuming,
brain consuming” process that has also been
“thought-provoking and intriguing”**

*“This transition to a ‘Local Management Entity’
is a big story. This has never been done before.”*

—Ralph Smith

**A Report by The Diarist Project
based on 36 interviews with individuals involved with the
Annie E. Casey Foundation-supported
Making Connections Initiative
February 2008**

Introduction

In the late 1990s, after a process of talking with more than 600 people about the design of its new, long-term community change initiative, the Annie E. Casey Foundation made a decision that surprised many people. Unlike most other multi-site initiatives begun by national funders (including some of its own), the Casey Foundation decided not to choose a local organization to manage the work in each site.

Instead, the foundation would assign its own staff people to be “Site Team Leaders” who would work with teams of local people to develop and manage *Making Connections* in each site.

“People thought we were crazy,” remembers Ralph Smith, the foundation’s senior vice president. “A national foundation is going to launch a multi-site initiative and not use a local intermediary organization in each site? People didn’t think we could do it.”

Why did the foundation choose this path? “Our thinking was that the local intermediary approach hadn’t really worked all that well,” Smith explains. “At the outset of an initiative, you are still inventing. You’re still fine tuning. You’re still learning.”

As a result, the foundation needed “an agility and flexibility and nimbleness at the outset.” But once an intermediary organization is selected and a grant agreement drawn up, that flexibility disappears.

As does the foundation’s direct connection with the site. “We didn’t think we could learn as much if we had an intermediary between us and what was going on on the ground,” Smith said recently.

Plus, selecting one organization to be the intermediary often drives other organizations away from the table, the foundation believed.

“What we had learned from many initiatives is that relationships matter. We had to invest the time, the effort and the presence to develop really meaningful relationships. We didn’t think we could do that as well if we had an intermediary.”

—Ralph Smith

Making Connections was supposed to be about connecting these organizations and helping them work together. (See page 3 for more on the foundation’s thinking about intermediaries.)

“What we had learned from *New Futures* and many other initiatives is that relationships matter. We had to invest the time, the effort and the presence to develop really meaningful relationships. We didn’t think we could do that as well if we had an intermediary.”

Smith and many others think this very different approach has worked very well. Speaking to a room full of partners from *Making Connections*’ sites, Smith noted that, if the foundation had decided at the beginning on one local organization to manage this initiative, “virtually no one in this room today would be here. It’s been a function of the relationships and of us learning about the capabilities, willingness and the commitment of local people and organizations.”

But Smith says that the Casey Foundation long knew that, if it wanted to sustain the *Making Connections* work in the sites, its own staff and consultants couldn’t keep playing the “team leader” and “local site coordinator” roles. In April 2006, the foundation laid out its thinking about the future of *Making*

Connections in a paper called “Sustaining Results: Institutionalizing Local Management for *Making Connections*.”

This paper called for each site to designate a “Local Management Entity” that would take over many of the roles that the foundation and its local site coordinators had been playing. The foundation outlined a process for transitioning to this “LME” that would involve residents, other local partners, the existing site teams and the Casey Foundation. It also laid out a timetable that called for sites to decide on an LME and negotiate a Letter of Agreement between the LME and the foundation. The deadline varied according to the site, ranging from the end of 2006 to the end of 2007.

When Smith and Frank Farrow, who manages *Making Connections* for the foundation, announced this transition, they asked for feedback. Not surprisingly, they got a lot of it, both at two meetings that involved many site people and in a June 2006 diarist report that summarized the responses of more than 30 people from nine sites.

People understood very clearly that this transition to a “Local Management Entity” was a very big deal. It meant big changes for both local partners and staff, many of whom had invested both time and emotional energy in the *Making Connections*’ ideas and work. It meant big changes for each site’s partners, one of whom would probably become the LME.

The LME transition process also called the question of what the role of the residents would be, both in this transition process and in what followed.

Finally, it raised the question of which parts of *Making Connections* would be sustained. Many people had invested a lot in *Making Connections*’ vision of change. Indeed, many had helped shape that vision and they didn’t want to lose it.

But while people expressed unease with aspects of this coming transition process, most people seemed to accept the core notion: that it was time for local people to manage *Making*

Why the Casey Foundation decided not to start *Making Connections* by working with one local organization

Reports done by Chicago’s Chapin Hall on the Neighborhood and Family Initiative (NFI) confirmed a lesson the Casey Foundation learned from its earlier New Futures initiative: designating a local lead or intermediary organization as a funnel for investment or technical assistance often resulted in funders anointing one group as first among previously competitive equals. That intervention of community power, prestige, and alignment could undermine an initiative in fundamental ways.

“The search for a lead exacerbated local competition for funding and created a ‘winners-and-losers’ mentality between local organizations,” said a Casey official.

New Futures, NFI and other initiatives also taught the foundation that time and effort taken to build intermediary organizations draws energy away from the people and places who need to be at the center of the work.

“As soon as you get into the collaborative structure, you talk about a focus on the organization and its leadership, not the people who live and work and worship in a community,” a Casey official observed.

The task of selecting a lead also seemed inherently flawed: few outside funders have enough local knowledge and information to make good choices.

With *Making Connections*, the foundation decided it would take time to understand community dynamics, history and context rather than risk altering or ignoring those factors by focusing on a small set of grantees. To build a family-strengthening movement deep enough to result in better outcomes for vulnerable children, the foundation thought it needed to work with the many, not the few.

“Casey did not go in and tap leaders [for *Making Connections*],” a former NFI official observes. “They looked at established leaders and said, ‘Let’s build on what is naturally occurring. . . .’ *Making Connections* is a beautiful phrase. Make connections with what already exists.”

—From *External Reconnaissance*, by Will Fay.

Connections. As long-time Denver partner Myrna Hipp put it: “This is an appropriate time to start moving to an LME if this is ever going to be adopted as a local initiative and we really want to see the work sustained over a long period of time.”

The result of all this has been a very interesting, very labor intensive, sometimes emotional process, one that was still going on in each site in late 2007 (though most sites had designated or were about to designate a local management entity).

Out of all this intensity has come a tremendous amount of learning. To document this learning, during 2007, the *Making Connections* diarists interviewed key residents, other partners and local *Making Connections* staff. Altogether, 36 people in seven sites have reflected about how the process has been working locally.

These people were asked about the greatest challenges, what they thought about the Casey Foundation's role so far, and what its role should be in the future. They were also asked about the operational challenges that their sites would face once an LME was in place. (See appendix for list of questions.)

People had a lot to say about many aspects of the LME transition process. Most thought that the process has generally gone well. Indeed, in some sites, the process had led to a new level of respect among residents and other partners and generated a deeper commitment to the local *Making Connections* work.

But even in the sites where the process has worked well, the challenges have been large and the energy invested considerable. The process has been *"intensive, time consuming and brain consuming,"* in the words of Des Moines partner Nicole Beaman. *"There are a lot of components to work out. It's thought-provoking, intriguing and interesting."*

Why has this process been so challenging? People talked about several reasons:

- This process of shifting the management of an initiative several years into that initiative is new. There wasn't a lot to learn from.
- It is not a straight-forward, linear process. There are multiple stakeholders, at many levels. There is seven years of history.

- The process entails big changes, not just in how the initiative is managed but in people's lives. Many people also fear that the process will lead to changes in ideas and values that they hold close.
- Finally, the process was evolving as it was happening, and evolving in very different ways in different sites.

One key reason people think this has been so hard is that this process is new. *"This is the first time that I've been in foundation work that we've had a national funder who came in and brought a program and now wants to create a process in which it can be sustained, with the funder not being the primary driver for it,"* explained Betsy Bikoff, a funding partner from Indianapolis. *"How can this happen and will it work?"*

Peggy Storey, a resident from Indianapolis, pointed out that *"this is new to everyone. Making Connections is in learning curve, [the new LME] is in a learning curve, residents are in a learning curve. Everyone involved is in learning mode."*

Storey added that this process is not the *"end of the game"* but the *"beginning of a new game, a new movement. There will be trial and error."*

A resident from a different site said essentially the same thing: *"The idea, perception and goal is that something new is breaking through."*

And as with anything new, there is a lot to learn, noted White Center's Aileen Balahadia: *"We're trying to bring together four groups representing different constituencies, that have different opinions and that are very diverse. We're trying to agree on a process. Just making sure people understand what's happening and that we are speaking a language that people can understand is a huge challenge."*

Balahadia also points out the sheer size of the task: *"We're trying to take a \$2.5 million initiative that currently has no official structure and place it within the existing nonprofit structure"* of the relatively small organization that will become White Center's LME.

It is also not the kind of process that can be easily summarized in, say, seven simple steps. Indeed, a “roadmap” to the process that the foundation put together needed eight pages to list “What Needs to be Accomplished” in each of four stages of the LME transition process. It described 21 distinct tasks.

Even this “roadmap” doesn’t completely capture the complexity of the process, believes Denver’s long-time site coordinator, Susan Motika. *“This process tests you because you can’t just follow a linear path. There isn’t a predictable equation.”*

One reason it isn’t an easily predictable process is that it involves diverse people and organizations, many of whom have been deeply engaged with *Making Connections* for many years.

“People have blood, sweat and tears in this,” Motika said. *“Making Connections is not an easy environment. People are very passionate about this work.”* She thinks one key is that you must keep *“trying to bring out other people’s views and make their voices part of the solutions.”* But doing this demands a big investment of time and energy.

Plus, at the same time that sites are *“trying to navigate through a lot of different groups of people, we’re also trying to understand where the foundation is coming from, what’s their perspective,”* in Balahadia’s words.

The transition process has also been intellectually and emotionally challenging because it involves big changes, not just in how an initiative is managed, but in people’s lives and work. Several people made this point.

“If major change is happening, it can create a lot of anxiety that can result in distrust, and people getting burnt out,” explained White Center’s Sili Savusa.

“People don’t like change,” Balahadia said. *“They want to know, ‘Why do we have to change?’”*

Part of this unease with change, says a resident in one site, is that change can mean a loss

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The many local people who perform a staff function for *Making Connections*—some of whom have been doing this work for many years—are among those who may have to take on new roles. Theresa Fujiwara counted 33 people in White Center, many of them residents, who get support through *Making Connections*.

“For the staff,” explained Denver’s Motika, *“there’s a lot of fear of changing staffing structure.”* Motika herself announced that she was leaving the site coordinator role in the fall of 2007.

“The sad part of this work,” said a partner from another site, *“is that the current staff may not be the staff of the LME.”*

There are also many residents who have gotten their first leadership opportunities through *Making Connections*, residents who may need to step aside to allow other residents to also lead the work, according to White Center’s Savusa, a resident and a long-time member of the Trusted Advocates, a group that brought the resident perspective to *Making Connections*.

Savusa said that, *“Some are clinging to the whole history and value of the Trusted Advocates as an independent entity. They don’t want to lose that. So that’s all part of the process. It’s about change. And change is hard for anybody.”*

But the unease with change in *Making Connections* is not just about the loss of power or a job or a visible leadership role. It is also about the potential loss of a set of ideas and values that motivated many people involved with this initiative, whether they are staff, residents or other partners.

"People have invested a lot," explains Denver resident leader Sandy Douglas. *"Many are questioning if they can continue to do this."*

Douglas herself is one of them. She said that she is watching to see how fair and how willing to change Denver's new LME will be. *"Because I have been in it such a long time, I don't have a lot more to give. I need to see if the seeds that have been planted grow. If they don't grow, I don't see how I could stay in it."*

Many people like Douglas worry that what they regard as the essence of *Making Connections* will change. Balahadia touched on one aspect of this: *"We need to figure out how we can continue the creativity within a more tightly controlled structure."*

One more factor has made this a very challenging process: the fact that it was evolving as it was happening, plus it was evolving in different ways in different sites.

The frustration with—and appreciation of—the changes that the Casey Foundation made during the process is communicated in section 3 of this report, which focuses on the foundation's role.

But most people thought that these changes were inevitable given the newness of the process and the reality that great diversity has developed over the years in *Making Connections'* 10 sites.

"There are 10 sites that we can learn from," noted Des Moines partner Nicole Beaman, *"but it's not like you can take those and plug them*

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in here. I've learned that, to some extent, Casey would like it if that would work, but it won't. Every community is having the same essential conversation. The meat is the same, but how we play it out is different. I think the end result will be different in every community."

Indeed, the end results will be different. The diversity among the entities that are becoming the LMEs is striking. In two sites, it will be, at least partly, the local United Way (Denver and Des Moines). In one site, it will be a community foundation (Indianapolis). In another, it will be a relatively new community organization based in the site (White Center). In still another, it will be a city agency in conjunction with three other local organizations (San Antonio). Two sites will also have more than one organization performing LME functions. Four sites (Hartford, Louisville, Milwaukee and Oakland) won't have LMEs.

"While the foundation may have wanted the LMEs to look alike, it has accepted the fact that they won't," said Denver partner Cecilia Broder. *"I give Casey credit for this. I think they were smart. It appears they let communities do some tailoring. It's probably tough for them not to have said, 'It should look like this.'"*

Broder added that, *"It will be fascinating to see what works and what doesn't."*

How has the process been going?

1

Despite the many challenges of this transition process and what many see as the tight timelines, many people said that they feel good about how the process has been playing out in their sites.

"The process has been going as well as can be expected," White Center's Fujiwara said. *"It may be I'm naïve, but the fact is they still come to the table and they come with good will. So there's something about the process that's working"*

"So far the process has been going pretty good," reported Des Moines' Margaret Wright. *"We've been able to come to decisions. We haven't been stuck anywhere."*

"I think the process has worked well locally," said Denver partner Hipp. *"It's been unusually smooth."*

However, this has not been everyone's experience. In San Antonio, a struggle developed between a group that sees itself as the voice of residents and other partners, which included a city agency.

"My personal opinion is that I think we rushed it," said Ramon Vasquez. *"We're not giving it the critical thinking that needs to be part of all this. I think we're just kind of reacting to something that's been put into motion. I think there are good intentions, but I don't think that it is the best thing for us right now. I don't think that the right people are at the table."*

Why has the process worked well in many sites? It seems to be a series of factors, including the time devoted to the process (especially the time spent making sure that people were on board and saying what they were thinking and feeling), the time that many people at the table had already spent together

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working on *Making Connections*, and most sites' long experience working with residents.

Hipp said that Denver's process has worked well in part because of site coordinator *"Susan Motika's efforts to make sure she got input from everyone, both through meetings and individually."* Explaining why she does this, Motika said that you must *"keep trying to bring out other people's views and make their voices part of the solutions."*

Denver's Sue Tripathi said that, *"The process is working because we've taken the time to get information out. We have given ourselves the time to meet weekly. Susan has been updating people between meetings."*

Tripathi added that all these meetings have allowed *Making Connections* to work through United Way's many questions about the LME role. *"We have processed it ourselves how we want this relationship to be and grow."*

"The process is true to what we said Making Connections-Denver is about. It's true to our structure. We are involving our partners and staff. We are keeping lines of communication open and are communicating frequently. It's going as it should be."

Broder, Mile High United Way's senior vice president, thinks it has helped that United Way "has been involved since the beginning. It's not like one side didn't know about the other. I think it's been an easier conversation because we know each other. It's been an easy process."

This history of residents and partners working together in most of *Making Connections'* sites is what makes this process of selecting an LME quite different than the process of selecting a local intermediary at the beginning of an initiative, whether that selection was done by a national funder or a group of local people and organizations.

For Denver's Tripathi, the fact that people had a lot of history with *Making Connections* and felt connected to it meant that they "were able to wear multiple hats" when they were sitting at the table: their *Making Connections*-Denver hat, their Mile High United Way hat, their resident hat, their Community Learning network hat.

"If you are willing to do that, the probability of negotiating effectively is higher than if you are just wearing your own hat. It's not a guarantee that it will all work out, but it certainly helps the process."

What also helps the process is people overcoming their insecurity about the future and being "open and authentic," in the words of Mary Martin, a partner from Des Moines. *"If the people in the room are all in a very good state of mind, they will have access to their best wisdom and creativity. There is no limit to how creative and amazing this can be. But it definitely comes from people being willing to let their past thinking about everything go to the side and be present and open when we have these discussions."*

The key, Martin adds, to trust the process and not try to get the answers too quickly. *"We get flare-ups of insecurity when we think we should already have all the answers, but in general I really think we are limiting ourselves if we jump too quickly to the way this needs to look."*

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The history of residents working with partners through *Making Connections* has also made a big difference, according to many residents themselves.

Denver's Sandy Douglas reported that, *"It's a good table. It's a table that allows everyone's voice to be heard. Residents can assert themselves to any level they desire. They may have a fear because you have some pretty powerful people around that partners' table, but the model allows the voice of the people to be heard."*

Shirley Webster, a resident leader in Indianapolis, said something very similar: *"It is a great working table. Nothing has come up we cannot work through. It has felt good to be on it so far. You can feel like you know something and there is always a lot to be learned."*

Indeed, she reports that this process of selecting and defining an LME has helped amplify the voice of residents in this site. *"Overall, I think this helps both us as residents and the organizations because those representing the organizational partners get to gain real insight into our experiences."*

"The partner organizations have had the benefit of seeing real growth of residents through this process. At first, I think it was difficult for them to see how residents fit into the picture. Now, through their observation of our participation as well as individual conversations, they see how exciting it is to have residents at the table who are articulate and informative. They have witnessed our growth."

Monty Hulse, Indianapolis' transition coordinator, says that "a high degree of trust" has developed through the process. *"The residents trust Making Connections, they trust Casey, and so they are willing to trust others they have not known. The way they express their voice, express themselves in those meetings, has earned the trust of institutional partners."*

Something very similar happened in Providence, according to resident leader Judy Perry. *"At first I was put off by a few difficult people around the table, but I've been able to build individual relationships with them, which has helped me overcome feelings of intimidation because of their position and power. You simply have to be able to break out of your shell and open up in order to ask questions and learn."*

In at least a couple of the sites, residents who had been involved with *Making Connections* for many years felt that the process didn't do enough to incorporate their views into the decisions about an LME.

Many residents who served as White Center's Trusted Advocates, a key voice for residents in this site, thought they should have at least had the right to sign-off on White Center's LME designation. They eventually did sign off, but it took close to a year of sometimes intense meetings to get to this point.

Some people involved with Westside United, a resident group that grew out *Making Connections*, were also upset by the decision that came from San Antonio's process. *"Here is the reality,"* said Ramon Vasquez. *"It is supposed to be about resident engagement and leadership. Here was the most important decision that Making Connections was ever going to have to make [the selection of an LME], and residents should be making that decision. They should be part of that ... So here was a missed opportunity again."*

Westside United was part of a group that was competing to become San Antonio's LME. People from several sites reported an undercurrent of competition in the process.

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San Antonio Site Team Leader Victor Azios thinks that Westside United's disappointment reflects the evolution of *Making Connections*. *"Some of the people who stayed with us from the beginning were bitter. There are more residents involved now. There are more institutions. There have been some broad, visible successes that came from residents working with institutions."*

"I think the process was successful in gathering a lot of perspectives about the LME. But a process like this has to come to a conclusion. Not everyone will like that conclusion." Azios hopes that, once the frustration gets expressed, a stronger relationship will result. *"As a community we'll get through this."*

Azios thinks that San Antonio's decision is based on the idea that *"change cannot be sustained without co-investment by institutions."* Residents working with institutions is what will lead to the kind of large-scale changes that *Making Connections* wants to achieve, Azios believes. *"The challenge for Making Connections will be whether the voices of residents can continue to be part of this process."*

He thinks that San Antonio *Making Connections* has been going through the "stages of collaboration." The first stage is getting residents to the table, sitting with institutions. *"Before, yes, we sat together. But the key is whether you can act together. The next stage in collaboration is whether you can sit down and figure it out together. A lot of people don't trust that process."*

What have been the biggest challenges?

2

Most people focused on three challenges. One was the time frame for selecting a Local Management Entity. The second was how to deeply involve residents in this critical decision. The third was how to communicate what was happening and what the expectations were.

The challenge of completing a very time-consuming process within a set amount of time.

Many people feel that the process has been “too rushed,” in the words of White Center partner Jim Diers. In explaining why they think this, these people talked about how complex this process is and all the things that needed to be accomplished to make it succeed. Their basic point is that the LME selection process is about much more than selecting an entity to manage *Making Connections* in the future.

“It brings up a lot of tough issues that probably would have been good to start addressing way back when the organization started,” explains Diers. *“Now it seems a little rushed. Casey is really pushing hard to have it all transitioned over.”* He thinks it’s especially time consuming because of the effort to have it directed by community.

One local *Making Connections* staff person believes that, *“The timeline was not realistic. I think Casey was really unrealistic about how long it would take. When you engage seriously in this process, you have to be about the business of explaining to a core group of people what the components of an LME are, yet those are still evolving. Even now we are clarifying.”*

*“For anyone to take *Making Connections* and move forward, it must be done with a deep understanding and comprehension. They not only need*

a great deal of information, but time to absorb it. They need time to explore and determine if there are mutual interests and how to make those interests work.

“The relationship building is complicated. But you must build those relationships. You have to know their style, reasoning and thought process. You need to be listening for the down sides or negatives that you haven’t thought of.”

Jim Mulholland, a resident leader from Indianapolis, agrees that, *“It’s going to take a lot of time. I have been amazed at how slow this is. I really thought it would happen faster. Now going through it, I see how it could not have happened faster.”* It’s not the decisions that require so much time, he explains, but the process of *“getting people comfortable with each other.”*

“Everyone was nervous about everything at the start. The first time we said that half of the board should be residents, the funders were visibly anxious. However, when they saw residents engage and lead the design team, they realized what might be possible. We kept talking and what seemed radical in the beginning seemed acceptable after six months and exciting after a year. I think if we or the foundation had tried to push for decisions quicker, we would have failed.”

“This process takes a lot longer than either the site or foundation expected. Residents and institutional partners alike said the time that this has taken is frustrating. But time is what it took to assure a real seat at the table for residents.”

—Jim Mulholland

"It was about comfort. If you tried to push it through faster, it would've created more anxiety. It's a long process. We're looking at almost two years from when the first discussions happened. So if another city is starting from scratch, they need to know that it takes a couple of years."

Mulholland adds, *"This process takes a lot longer than either the site or foundation expected. Residents and institutional partners alike said the time that this process has taken is frustrating. But time is a big part of what it took to assure a real seat at the table for residents."*

It also takes time to get people comfortable with the substance of the conversations at these meetings, points out Des Moines' Nicole Beaman. *"For me, when you have the intensity of conversation that we do, I just have to walk away from it and put it aside for a few hours. My mind has to process it. It is challenging to process the conversation when it's at that level."*

And it takes time to get buy-in, Beaman adds. *"Some people say, 'It's a long time.' But it takes that long because of the depth of the conversation. It takes time to be comfortable. The last thing we want to do is have someone come in and say, 'We need to do it now this way.' It's important to have buy-in, and that will make it successful. That will just take time."*

And it's not just getting individuals comfortable with each other, it is getting organizations as a whole comfortable and committed, points out Hartford's Ana-Maria García.

"CBOs have boards of directors that come and go. Agreements may be reached with an executive director, but there needs to be an institutional bond with the board based on acceptance of and support for Making Connections' goals. This is essential in order to maintain longer-term relationships, and forming these bonds takes time."

"A year is often not really enough time. On the other hand, three years is too long. Perhaps 18-24 months seems doable. That's how it has been panning out."

Why Now?

Based on what it's learned from previous place-based community change initiatives, the Casey Foundation believes that focusing on sustainability during this phase of *Making Connections* is critical for two reasons:

1. Now past the midpoint of a decade-long initiative, the foundation and site teams have built the relationships and acquired the working knowledge of local context, history and organizations needed to make key decisions about management and governance that will help ensure the long-term sustainability of the work.
2. Changing the foundation's role from day-to-day operator of the initiative to that of an engaged, influential investor at this stage is vital to ensure continued progress toward measurable, durable changes in child, family and neighborhood outcomes. Sites need to demonstrate how and when a foundation can step back in ways that allow co-investment, strong partnerships and powerful strategies to grow and accelerate.

Moving now toward local management entities, rather than at the end of the initiative, also allows sites and the foundation the time and space needed to build the local capacity for change that can make a long-term difference for children and families.

—From "Frequently Asked Questions: Sustaining the Work of *Making Connections*" (10-20-07)

But perhaps the greatest challenge is getting residents and other partners comfortable with each other, says Beaman.

"Sometimes residents say they feel uncomfortable coming to the table. Maybe they're wearing jeans and others are in suits. I don't see that, but they feel uncomfortable and I get that. When you engage people who are different, you have to develop common understanding and respect. That takes time to develop, and in this group we have been able to build that trust and respect."

Educating people about *Making Connections* locally also took time, Providence's Judy Perry points out. *"Things could have moved a bit faster if initially folks at the table had a better understanding of the work. Taking the time to help educate everyone set us back a little."*

Des Moines' Margaret Wright notes the simple logistics of running a process like this one. "Members have said they didn't want to take a full day to do this, and needed two hours at a time. But there is only so much you can get done in two hours, and we can only do that once a month, with subcommittee meetings in between. It takes partners' time, and that is a challenge because it's not their full-time job."

Beaman makes a similar point: "There are times when we feel we have circular conversations because there are different sets of people at the table at one time and another. At times I think, 'Wow we've had that conversation,' but maybe not with that mix of people, or with that piece of knowledge."

Beaman's conclusion: "My advice is just to let it play out."

One other local Making Connections staff person agrees. "I think senior management needs to realize that this work is inherently complicated and then they need to be at peace with that. People aren't just delaying or wasting time talking. People are not just spinning their wheels. This is time consuming work. It's a collection of extremely diverse, yet extremely important stakeholders."

"I don't know how many other cities are going through complicated discussions such as the ones we are experiencing, but I know these discussions are part of everyone getting completely clear on what this deal means. I can't stress enough that the stakeholders need to feel comfortable about this deal if it is going to work for the long-term."

It is especially important not to rush this process in Making Connections, notes White Center's Aileen Balahadia, because here "you add the complexity of having a process that respects community."

White Center's Sili Savusa agrees: "The timelines have been unrealistic because stuff like this takes a lot of time and it's hard to put a timer on it." But when the timer has dinged, Savusa said, the foundation has been willing to re-set it. "When we've really needed some flexibility, that's been given."

"The timelines have been unrealistic because stuff like this takes a lot of time and it's hard to put a timer on it. But, when we've really needed some flexibility, that's been given."

—Sili Savusa

But not everyone found the timeline too rushed. "Initially I thought the timeline was unrealistic," reflects Providence's Robyn Frye. "But, after meeting with other Local Site Coordinators, I have changed my mind. I believe the timeline is based on a national picture of where sites are. On the whole I think it is realistic."

San Antonio's Dennis Campa had no problem with the deadline, saying that he thought the process took too long. "When a process takes as long as this it begins to wear people down. What they wanted to do was commendable, but the length of time we went through to get there was laborious and arduous."

Providence's Garry Bliss thinks the deadline is needed: "I like the fact that the foundation is sticking to its conviction that a decision needs to be made." He adds, "I wish the process were further along, and I don't think I'm alone. Sometimes the meetings feel like we are going back to square one. I suppose that if going back to square one is where you need to go in order to get to where you need to be, then so be it."

A local Making Connections staff person agrees that the pressure of a deadline is needed "to ensure we're rigorous about moving forward." She explains, "There is a value in setting deadlines, but their's is an unrealistic deadline. So the question is, how do we keep that timeline pressure so that it's productive and not destructive? Well, when reality hits them in the face, they deal with it. We want to get to the same end place; it's just the how and the time that's the issue."

The challenge of deeply involving residents in this process.

This is one of the topics about which people had the most to say. Many believe that this process of selecting the entity that will manage *Making Connections* in the future is the biggest test so far of both *Making Connections*' commitment to residents and its ability to engage and train residents so that they can shape a process like this one.

Denver's Susan Motika explains why a commitment to "resident-driven problem solving" is so important in *Making Connections*. *"If people aren't attracted to that—resident engagement—if that's not enough, then they're not really captivated by what makes us powerful. If they aren't, then they aren't the LME for us. We need someone who is captivated by the best we have to offer: resident-driven change. If people can't stand up and support and affirm that work, then we don't want them as an LME."*

According to many of those interviewed, most sites developed processes that incorporated residents very well. For at least some of these sites, the LME selection process really seemed to call the question of the real role residents would have in *Making Connections*.

Storey saw a dramatic change in the relationship between residents and other partners as the process developed. *"When we first came to the [sustainability] table, they were rather kind of cold and reluctant. But because we had folks at the table not afraid to speak, they kind of changed their thinking and sense of respect."*

*"Once they found out we had become empowered, they asked us questions and they were surprised at our response and at our empowerment. The ones representing our neighborhoods at the table were not intimidated, nor afraid to say what we thought or what our experience had been with *Making Connections*. It surprised them and kind of took the wind out of their sails. It was like, 'OK, we are not that important.' The residents gained a respect from the funders at that table."*

"I like the fact that the foundation is sticking to its conviction that a decision needs to be made. I wish the process were further along, and I don't think I'm alone."

—Garry Bliss

The funding partners in this site saw this process in a very similar way. *"I don't think that everybody from the funding community had a good grasp of how far along those residents had come,"* says Betsy Bikoff.

"I know I didn't. And how strong they were and how willing they were to keep this going and how vested in the ownership they were."

"I hadn't seen that in the past in such an organized fashion. I think the inclusion of residents is what turned the table."

Bikoff adds that the residents successfully pushed the partners to make a commitment. *"When the residents came to the table and became actively involved in the process, I saw the funders begin to relax a bit and learn from the process. I think that's when [the local LME] realized they needed to be the player to do this."*

Another resident from this site, Elaine Cates, saw the evolution of the LME selection process in a very similar way. *"That first day when we were all sitting at the table with all of those people, it was like, we were way out of our league."*

But over time Cates realized that she could not just play in this league but have an impact on it. *"My role has been valuable because the big funders are not used to the residents being so involved and caring so much about their neighborhoods. I think they're used to giving the money and getting a little report back. But now you're*

hearing people share their stories, whether they've been successful or not, and how they've tried to make a difference."

Julie Barrett, another resident from Indianapolis, says that what struck her was how people listened to her. "Knowing that you're being listened to is an honorable thing. Those are the people that I thought saw me as invisible."

Guadalupe Iruegas, a Making Connections San Antonio resident, also thinks she has had an impact on the process: "As far as I am concerned as a resident, I've had the opportunities to speak. What kind of impact has that had? I think it has had some impact. Just the fact that I've been able to voice my concerns freely says a lot about this process."

A resident from still another city, Perry of Providence, had a similar experience. "At first I was put off by a few difficult people around the table, but I've been able to build individual relationships with them, which has helped me overcome feelings of intimidation because of their position and power. You simply have to be able to break out of your shell and open up in order to ask questions and learn.

"Overall, I think this helps both us as residents and the organizations because those representing the organizational partners get to gain real insight into our experiences.

"The partner organizations have had the benefit of seeing real growth of residents through this process. At first, I think it was difficult for them to see how residents fit into the picture. Now, through their observation of our participation as well as individual conversations, they see how exciting it is to have residents at the table who are articulate and informative. They have witnessed our growth."

Perry thinks that residents "have been able to influence some of the thinking around the capacities that an LME must possess. We have been able to be part of the decision making regarding the criteria for an LME, including what kind of culture they embody.

"I don't think that everybody from the funding community had a good grasp of how far along those residents had come. I know I didn't. I think the inclusion of residents is what turned the table."

—Betsy Bikoff

"From the resident perspective this speaks to our need to overcome feelings of being intimidated and to work towards gaining an equal voice."

In White Center, the resident voice had already been incorporated into the Trusted Advocates group, according to Savusa. As a result, incorporating residents into the LME process was a matter of having the Trusted Advocates guide the process.

Savusa adds that the LME that emerged from that process, the Community Development Association, had already established trust in White Center, everyone knew its director and "the community had built the CDA from the beginning and we felt like they were 'our' community entity."

But not everyone is convinced that residents are truly exercising some power in this transition. One resident says, "One of the things we hear is that residents want to have a voice. But when they say that, does that mean that having a voice and having power are two different things? Does that mean you just want us to sit at a table and have something to say, or do you want us to have some sense of control?"

What does this person think? "I think it's changing," though she adds, "we're in a beginning stage. I bet we have a few residents they wish were not there."

A partner from this city believes it has changed: "The environment right now is so rich

and fertile for this way of doing business. We're at a point of much more hopefulness. I really, really applaud where Making Connections has gotten in encouraging and supporting the resident 'voice.' Now that we've empowered this resident voice, we can't run away when they speak!"

Bill Taft, an Indianapolis partner, isn't certain yet. Resident involvement in his site's LME process has shown that, *"You really can have residents at the table when policy decisions are being made."*

But Taft adds, *"I still think they're not always at the table when the hard decisions are being made. Theoretically, they should be."* But, he adds, *"those who control the resources decide those things in the safest environment they can, and doing it with the residents at the table isn't exactly that environment."*

A San Antonio resident, Ramon Vasquez, also wonders about the impact that residents are having. *"It became a question of whether people were educated enough. It came across as though there were questions whether the residents would have the ability to make those decisions. It was kind of offensive. It became pretty clear that you are 'residents' by convenience. It took a lot for me not to walk out of that meeting. I was ready to walk."*

But San Antonio's TARC coordinator, Linda Ximenes, thinks residents have *"enhanced the process. It's clear what their perspective is. They can speak more authentically and insightfully about the things that they desire or are concerned about. The residents on the Selection Committee have been wonderfully conscientious and insightful. They've clearly brought richness and legitimacy to the process."*

A resident from another site thinks it is a question of power. *"The problem is, to do true resident engagement, you have to give up power. And they are very nervous about that."*

Another resident from this city agrees. *"My great concern is, once we set this in motion, it will become something other than resident driven. We need input with power and impact on decisions made."*

"It became a question of whether people were educated enough. It came across as though there were questions whether the residents would have the ability to make those decisions. It was kind of offensive."

—Ramon Vasquez

But she is optimistic. *"I feel confident that whatever needs to be done to make it fair and equitable and successful will happen.... I would hate to think all the work that has been done would not result in something very positive at this end."*

What has helped residents to have a strong voice in this process? Several people talked about why they believe residents have been effectively engaged in the LME process. The basic point they make is that it takes much more than a simple invitation to residents to participate.

Providence resident Perry says debriefs after the LME meetings helped her by allowing her to *"express my thoughts and get feedback from staff and other residents, which has helped me navigate through this process. Making Connections staff helped me deal with the challenges."*

She adds, *"At first I was intimidated."* But over time she *"learned that, if you don't speak up, then people will make decisions for you. If you don't get involved, then you won't know what's going on. My advice to other residents is not to be afraid of the faces in the room. Sit back and listen first, and after listening carefully, if you still don't understand something, then don't be afraid to ask."*

Peggy Storey from Indianapolis says that the training residents went through was critical in allowing them to know who else was at the table and what *Making Connections* was trying to accomplish in this process. *"You cannot be talking if you don't ... know what this is about."*

Elaine Cates, also from Indianapolis, said that having notes before each meeting was helpful. *“Each meeting got easier because we were more familiar and we understood each other better.”*

Storey added that going through the agenda before each meeting *“kept it from going off on a tangent”* and *“made us know where our parts were.”* She adds, *“It was impressive to them that we could do that, and be really enthusiastic and informed.”*

But education is not a one-way street. Several people made the point that residents need to have an opportunity to educate other partners.

“We have been helping organizations to really understand what resident engagement and leadership is, as well as how it works and how organizations can affirm it,” says Providence’s Perry.

“Some organizations claim they incorporate resident engagement in their work, but I know their efforts haven’t been at the level that we are seeking. Organizations really need to believe in resident engagement and leadership. How these organizations authentically incorporate residents will be one of our challenges.”

The challenge of communicating a complex and evolving process to a wide range of audiences.

Asked about the greatest challenges she’s faced in helping manage White Center’s LME process, site liaison Theresa Fujiwara says that *“the challenge now is the unspoken concerns and our clarity on messaging the value of this.”* Fujiwara’s comment captures what many people said about the communications challenges.

“Communication, in that it has to be constantly addressed,” said Monty Hulse Indianapolis transition coordinator, responding to the greatest challenges question. *“We have a change going on, and the communication going on around this change process is massive and complex.”*

“I had to understand what our purpose was, and why we were at the table. I also had to learn about the different organizations around the table and what they do. Then I had to come to understand exactly what the LME is all about.”
—Judy Perry

“The nature of Making Connections is changing—it is becoming a local initiative that the community has to hold in trust, and the culture and values of Making Connections have been identified, and we all have to be clear on that. This is about a body of knowledge, a set of practices and a set of relationships that have to be nurtured.”

Part of the communications challenge is that people had very different levels of understanding about **Making Connections**. *“I had to understand what our purpose was, and why we were at the table,”* explained Providence resident Perry. *“I also had to learn about the different organizations around the table and what they do. Then I had to come to understand exactly what the LME is all about.”*

Transferring so much knowledge to residents and other partners *“is the biggest piece,”* in Margaret Wright’s words. *“So they can understand what Making Connections Des Moines has been doing over the past seven years.”*

“This is a really complicated process,” added Denver’s Motika. *“To explain Making Connections in a way that’s meaningful to folks who aren’t in association with it can be extremely challenging.”*

Providence’s Robyn Frye agreed: *“We did not realize how much time it was going to take to educate or re-educate the partners we were calling*

around the table. Our partners needed help understanding their role with the initiative.

“They needed to be informed about the engagement of other partners in our various results areas. They also needed to be brought up to speed about the strategies in the results areas and the foundation of our work as envisioned in our new Theory of Change. It takes time to ‘get it.’”

Denver partner Myrna Hipp emphasized the need to communicate clearly with residents. *“We really needed to be sensitive to the fact that residents in these low-income neighborhoods have seen initiatives come and go over the years. We didn’t want it to look like it was just another initiative that produced a few short-term changes and then pulled out, yet again.”*

“It is important that the message be, ‘We are trying to look at ways to make this more locally owned. We have broken new ground and created a solid foundation that local funders can hopefully relate to and get involved in so this work can be sustained.’ It sounds simple, but it hasn’t been.”

A resident from a different site underscored Hipp’s point about residents who have experienced prior initiatives. This person especially wanted more clarity about the role of residents in this process. *“It’s not always been clear what is being expected of me and residents. Because of the lack of clarity, you don’t have a whole lot of trust. Past experiences color your perception.”*

One challenge for Fujiwara and the White Center site team was communicating the value of this LME process of change. *“I don’t mean it in a ‘fake’ way. We took it on because we did see that there was value for the community ultimately, that the merged entity would be the frame on which we can hang all the questions and anxieties and the hopes around what it can be.”*

“For me, that’s been the challenge. How do we message this, not only to the external world, but also internally, to those 33 people whose lives may be directly impacted through this change, because they’re currently employed directly or indirectly.”

Fujiwara said a key to communicating effectively was being able to customize the messages *“so that it works for the person receiving the message.”*

How is she dealing with this challenge? *“It feels like more meetings. Meetings are good, face to face, struggling with the issues at hand. But we need to balance that with peoples’ levels of tolerance and patience too. And we’re thinking more about the communication mechanism.”*

A central question—in White Center and several other sites—was who actually had the power to decide on who would become the LME and what its role would be. Without clear communication about the decision process and the LME’s role, some local people became anxious.

“Another question we keep hearing is, ‘Who actually is making the decisions about the LME?’” explained White Center’s Balahadia. *“Everyone’s concerned about who is making the final decision. It’s important for the community to know since the decisions affect the staff (it’s their livelihood and jobs) and community (it affects their ability to thrive as a result of this initiative). . . .”*

Most people in most sites seemed to think that the foundation and the local site teams did a lot to communicate about the process. But even in a site where many say that the process has gone very well, Indianapolis partner Bill Taft says that, *“There have been a couple of moments where it wasn’t very transparent how we made leaps from, ‘Here’s where we are now’ to, ‘Now we’re in a different place.’ Where and when did that happen?”*

“I’ve been part of a lot of processes and I know that’s what happens. But it’s not necessarily very consistent with the stated way on how it’s going to happen. I can see how some people could be disenchanted with that.”

One of the biggest communications challenges involved communicating what the foundation wants an LME to look like and do. The Foundation laid out its thinking about LMEs in its document “Sustaining Results: Institutionalizing Local Management for Mak-

ing *Connections*,” originally distributed in April 2006. Later documents clarified its thinking.

Part of the confusion stemmed from the foundation’s decision to be flexible about LMEs. “There is no blueprint for what a Local Management Entity has to look like,” stated the foundation’s Frequently Asked Questions document. “Indeed, there could be different models in all of the *Making Connections* sites, some involving only a single organization while others represent a partnership between a local non-profit organization, a government agency and a community foundation.”

The foundation documents did lay out what an LME would have to demonstrate to be selected (see page 20) and what the foundation’s “core expectations” are (see page 19).

The lingering confusion is perhaps a result of so many people being involved in the process in each site. While a couple of people from each site come to the foundation’s national meetings and receive the materials that explain its thinking, many other local people involved in the process do not do so.

“Sometimes it’s been difficult for community people and my board and staff to really understand the expectations from the foundation,” says Balahadia.

White Center’s Savusa agreed: *“One of the challenges is that the foundation doesn’t know what it looks like. This leads to a high level of anxiety.”*

Providence partner Garry Bliss says something very similar: *“The foundation has been quite clear on its timeline regarding a recommendation for the LME. In terms of what it really means for the organization that steps forward to sustain this, that has not been very clear.”*

Providence resident Perry adds that, *“Much of the conversation has been around, ‘Who is going to do what?’ Who will be in charge of different activities and programs such as trainings and outreach? Who will be responsible for managing staff and money?”*

“We continue to ask more questions and want more specific answers. The foundation has a broad, conceptual understanding of what they want in an LME. We wrestle with these questions.

This is a big commitment on our part if we do this.”

—Cecilia Broder

A different Providence partner repeats this idea, saying *“I don’t think the foundation’s expectations have been very clear.”*

Denver partner Cecilia Broder, of Mile High United Way, says, *“We continue to ask more questions and want more specific answers. The foundation has a broad, conceptual understanding of what they want in an LME.”* She adds, *“We wrestle with these questions. This is a big commitment on our part if we do this.”*

Broder says she understands that part of the challenge has been that the answers about the LME inevitably will vary depending on the site.

Denver’s Motika agrees. *“The foundation’s lack of specificity can be challenging for the site, partners and LME. We want more specificity, yet that can be difficult for Frank Farrow to provide. How do you provide enough of a framework that allows cities to innovate and tailor and yet define what Making Connections means in metro Denver?”*

Motika thinks a key question concerns *“not having a clear understanding of the Making Connections and LME relationship.”*

As the variations among the sites have become clearer, the foundation’s thinking has evolved, says Des Moines site coordinator Wright. She says that she often tells local people, *“As of today, these are the expectations of the foundation.’ I’m constantly doing that, so that people know they are not done. As soon as we think they are done, there is another version.”*

What's essential about what a Local Management Entity is and does?

Simply put, the essential elements are “results, residents and data.” Both sites and the Casey Foundation have been very clear that a Local Management Entity must commit to:

1. Achieving and sustaining the initiative's core **results**, increasing earnings, assets and early-grade success in the initiative's neighborhoods.
2. Actively collecting, analyzing and disseminating good **data** about children and families in the *Making Connections* neighborhoods, especially in terms of disaggregating disparities and inequities.
3. A governance or oversight structure that ensures **residents** have a powerful voice and seat at the decision-making table, and capacity to accelerate resident leadership, networking, mobilization and civic engagement strategies.

—From Frequently Asked Questions: Sustaining the Work of *Making Connections*

Yes, says White Center's Fujiwara, “*maybe they should be clearer. But I feel it's an unrealistic expectation at this point. It's both a strength and a weakness that they kind of 'go with the flow.' They have been fairly clear about what their bottom line is, and despite the pressure they continue to put on us to meet a timeline, we haven't had any negative consequences.*”

The sites also wanted more clarity about what they could expect from the foundation, especially in terms of resources. Casey's Ralph Smith stated early on that the transition to an LME was definitely not an “exit strategy.” People seemed to hear and appreciate this, but not hearing the specifics of this commitment was on the minds of many people, especially those thinking about taking on the LME role.

Providence's Bliss, the city's Director of Policy, especially wanted to know more about the resource commitment. “*Keep in mind that this whole process is really about figuring out how this work continues when the Casey funding is gone.*”

So, how do we keep doing this when the money isn't there?

“The Mayor wants to know what it means. He questions whether a leading role for the City will equate to more work for already overburdened, overworked departments. Is it something that Casey will help us do?”

Des Moines partner Nicole Beaman asked the same question: “*When Casey decides to change their investment, what do we do as partners? How do we carry on?*”

As the transition process continued, the Casey Foundation became much more explicit about its expectations of the sites and the LMEs as well as the foundation's commitments. At a meeting of potential LME partners in October 2007, the foundation provided a very detailed set of papers called “Sustaining the Work of *Making Connections*.” It included a revised 10-page Frequently Asked Questions document that responded directly to questions such as “Who will identify and select the LMEs?” This followed a summary of “expected funding arrangements” that was distributed at a July 2007 meeting.

San Antonio Site Team Leader Victor Azios thinks that, in this transition process, “*The foundation has given us more information, more clarity, more tools and more to work with than in almost any other phase of this initiative. There is little they've given us that I cannot communicate or translate effectively.*”

Several people said that the “expected funding arrangements” document was very helpful. (These interviews occurred before the other documents were distributed in October.)

San Antonio's Linda Ximenes thinks the foundation needs to keep clarifying its thinking. “*Be open to the idea that this hasn't gone exactly as you thought it would and continue to figure out how to keep it beneficial to the community.*”

Providence's Bliss says, “*I would benefit from being able to take a look at how others are doing this.*” Not only would this help his site's planning process, seeing that others are progressing would “*demonstrate that this is doable.*”

What about the Casey Foundation's role in this process?

3

Overall, most people think that the Casey Foundation has played a very helpful role in the LME selection process. *"The Foundation's role in investing in and providing the resources for this process has been excellent,"* says Providence's Garry Bliss. *"The meetings have been organized and run effectively. It doesn't seem as though people are trying to take on too much."*

The primary concerns people have had with the foundation have already been discussed: the tight timeline and the need for more clarity.

The question of whether the foundation has tried to influence the process too much generated a range of responses, at times in the same person. Some think the foundation has been "heavy-handed." Others have praised its flexibility and willingness to respond to sites.

What LMEs Must Demonstrate

- The kind of stature in the community that will allow a management entity to articulate the ideas of *Making Connections*, help champion local and state policy change efforts, and steward the results process.
- Proven ability to convene and collaborate with a broad range of public, private and civic sector partners.
- The organizational culture, leadership, and ability to work in concert with – and be accountable to – a range of stakeholders, including families who live in the *Making Connections* neighborhoods.
- The staff, infrastructure and support services needed to monitor progress, provide TA, and use good data.
- A strong commitment to closing gaps in earnings, assets and academic achievement between families in the *Making Connections* neighborhoods and those living in the surrounding city/county.

—From Frequently Asked Questions:
Sustaining the Work of *Making Connections*

Many people praised the foundation for the support it has provided throughout the process, such as paying for facilitators and consultants. *"I think enough of the right kind of support has been provided,"* says Bliss.

Susan Motika, *Making Connections*-Denver's local site coordinator, says her site has gotten great support from a consultant that the foundation brought from White Center, Wendy Watanabe. *"She is an extraordinarily practical, creative and systemic thinker. She is a joy for me to work with. She is exactly the kind of consultant you want. She's incredibly helpful. Casey needs someone like a Wendy in every city."*

Similarly, Denver's Sue Tripathi says that, *"The support has been timely and they've been very encouraging."* She notes that the person managing *Making Connections* nationally, Frank Farrow, has been very responsive to her site's "hard-hitting questions." Denver United Way's Cecilia Broder says something very similar: *"We know Frank and he has been very good at getting back to us with answers."*

One reason sites have asked a lot of questions is that the documents concerning the LME transition process have not always had enough clarity, a point discussed in the "Challenges" section of this report. A few people were frustrated by what seemed like constant changes in these documents.

"The only thing I would say is that sometimes we had to go out and seek documents and clarity from the foundation — especially when we were doing the values statements," said San Antonio Site Team Leader Victor Azios. *"Too many times, the documents were in draft format or were unfinished products. When we needed them, the documents weren't always there. But I understand this*

and I'm not a person who doesn't have tolerance for this."

To others, the foundation's changing thinking shows its willingness to learn from this new process and be flexible. Des Moines' partner Mary Martin cited the foundation's willingness to support two organizations to work together as this site's LME.

"The fact that they supported the two organizations was a very good indicator for me. For Frank and Ira to say they appreciate that and what it represents to the community, and that it is not the way other communities have done it ... they recognized what it meant and it's a good sign they could let go of their control and let the community handle it."

San Antonio's Linda Ximenes finds the foundation's clarifications helpful. *"The clarifications that they made have been very helpful. I'm appreciative of the fact that the foundation staff... have kept at arms length."*

But not everyone agrees that the foundation has kept enough distance from the process. A partner from one site says, *"Although I think the foundation has taken a very hands-off approach, the process is being facilitated by someone who is close to the foundation. For several meetings I kept getting this sense that the dynamic in the room was that everyone felt as if they were talking to the foundation. I think a much better dynamic was achieved when members of the committee sat down and starting talking with each other."*

White Center's Aileen Balahadia is blunter: *"The foundation's role in this has been quite heavy handed. They came in and said this transition to sustainability must happen, the planning must occur in 2007 and there must be a change in 2008."*

But she sees the other side of the coin. *"Now my board and I appreciate the fact that the foundation came in here heavy handed to say, 'While we're still engaged in this initiative, let's go through this, because we're still committed.' A lot*

"I do think Casey has been outstanding in their patience. I believe they are really looking for answers and clearly understand the need for patient, long-term support."

—Myrna Hipp

of initiatives just wait till the very end and you have a 6-month exit plan, then it's all gone."

Many people appreciate that the change to an LME is not an exit strategy. While some people think the LME transition process was rushed, they appreciate the fact that Casey will continue its support for several more years.

"I do think Casey has been outstanding in their patience," says Denver's Myrna Hipp. *"I believe they are really looking for answers and clearly understand the need for patient, long-term support."*

Providence's resident leader Judy Perry thinks the foundation has been generous in its funding commitment. *"I appreciate the fact that they do not plan to leave us hanging over the next three years."*

Denver's Broder says, *"I give them credit for doing it now and not at the 10-year mark saying, 'OK, we are out of here.' They are asking every local entity, 'What are you going to do three years from now?' and are making them look at that."*

Providence's Robyn Frye talks about the document distributed at a meeting in Chicago in July 2007 that laid out the foundation's three-year commitment, saying this *"makes the picture clearer and makes sense to me."*

She also noted that the document stated that Casey would continue to be *"an engaged and responsible investor."* This makes sense to her: *"After all, if I had just invested \$10 or \$11 million into this, I am going to be engaged."*

What will the challenges be once an LME is selected?

4

The challenge that generated by far the most reflection concerned how to preserve *Making Connections*' values and history that have emerged over the past seven years. There was much less reflection about the operational challenges that LMEs will face in taking over the local management of *Making Connections*, most likely because no site is at the operational stage yet.

Some people did reflect about the challenge of LMEs working with the Casey Foundation, which will be going through its own transition after being deeply involved in planning for and managing *Making Connections* for nearly a decade.

How can the history, values and knowledge from *Making Connections*' first seven years be retained?

Many people have thought a lot about the answer to this question. Indeed, the fact that many people had so much to say about this issue may be an indicator that the history and values won't be easily lost.

Des Moines site coordinator Margaret Wright summarized the challenge very well. *"When you are going to sustain this work in an existing organization, they have a mission and board of their own. To adopt Making Connections is not replacing their board or mission. It's an add-on."*

"There is thinking within the foundation that the adopting organization and the Making Connections mission and vision shouldn't be separate. But that doesn't seem possible for any partner in any site."

White Center's Teresa Fujiwara thinks the question should be: *"How can the history and values of the community and its residents be retained?"* She says that *"won't be an issue if residents are at the core of the LME."*

"I hope the residents and the Trusted Advocates will continue to invest in a way that they continue to build their capacity to take on leadership roles, at the governance level, the program level, the community organizing level. If you keep all that, the values will stay intact."

White Center's Sili Savusa would also change the question slightly, asking how the values of the Trusted Advocates can be retained. *"Making Connections is the support that has come along and helped elevate us and create this platform around community values."*

How does she think that the Trusted Advocates' values can be sustained? *"One way is to incorporate the values into the policies of the LME. Another is to take the Trusted Advocates organizing model as the community organizing model for the LME. And of course, maintaining resident involvement, because that's what it's all about: keeping residents engaged as part of the LME."*

"When you are going to sustain this work in an existing organization, they have a mission and board of their own. To adopt Making Connections is not replacing their board or mission. It's an add-on."

—Margaret Wright

Des Moines' Wright thinks a key to retaining the values and history is to keep a few people who can "pass on the history." But, she adds, *"We shouldn't let the history dictate too much what can or can't be done."*

Providence resident leader Perry agrees with Savusa: *"I think the history and values of Making Connections Providence will be retained as long as residents continue to have a strong voice. The engagement of me and other residents will continue as long as we maintain that voice and are allowed the freedom to make decisions about our needs and roles."*

"I think a great challenge would be posed if the culture of the organization that is chosen to be the LME is one where there is a lack of understanding about how to incorporate resident voice. I think we can overcome that potential challenge as long as we are provided the opportunity to continue as a think-tank."

Providence partner Garry Bliss believes that the key will be, *"Who will still be at the table a few years from now?"* But whoever is still there, Bliss thinks that the key is *"the recognition of the value of values."*

"To achieve this may require Casey to provide a little insight into the thinking process that took place from the time of designing this initiative. Why has it taken the particular shape and form that it has? How have the history and values helped to achieve proven results? Being able to point to those results provides proof of the benefits and the necessity of those values." Without results, he says, all Making Connections has is *"an abstract concept that could well be left behind."*

Hartford's Helene Figueroa agrees about the importance of values. *"What I think is going to keep people at the table once the LME is appointed is the continuous infusion of the Making Connections' values. These values will always have to be at the front and center of the work. Residents and organizational partners will have to be openly committed to them."*

"I think the history and values of Making Connections Providence will be retained as long as residents continue to have a strong voice. The engagement of me and other residents will continue as long as we maintain that voice and are allowed the freedom to make decisions about our needs and roles."

—Judy Perry

Cecilia Broder, who works for the organization that will become Denver's LME, emphasizes the continuity of existing structures. *"I think everything continues. You continue to have the partners' board. You continue to have Making Connections-Denver doing its work. I think if we do this, we can learn a lot from Making Connections-Denver about place-based work and how residents are involved. I think we can learn how we should be working with residents in other Denver-area communities."*

"I am not sure I see a huge change. I don't see the pendulum swinging to, 'We are the LME and this is how you are going to do business.' I see it more as continuing on because Making Connections-Denver has had good success."

Providence's Frye also emphasizes continuity, saying that people and organizations need to continue to be involved. *"Residents and organizations are equal partners in this work, and that's how the history and values will be retained. Despite the fact that we are at a disadvantage because we are simultaneously in an implementation year and a transition, this is all quite timely because everything is still fresh."*

"Our work is well thought out and planned and we are extremely passionate about it. Folks have been through this with us, and now there is a structure in place where everyone knows where

they can fit in, plug in and grow in. They are not likely to let that go. Having been part of the development of this work, I firmly believe they will do what they have to do to retain the values and the history."

A Providence partner says that the fact that the current *Making Connections* Providence team is looking back to "recognize the good work done in the past... makes me think that maintaining the history and values of *Making Connections* will happen naturally.

"Also, the values of *Making Connections* are crafted into the description of the LME and will become part of any future partnership agreements. Therefore, at a certain point, you have to trust that those values will be carried forward simply because it is stated that they have to be."

This person adds, "Perhaps a type of watch-dog function might benefit the future of this work. Not necessarily a governance structure, but maybe an advisory group that can oversee the work all the time. This group would be charged with the responsibility of making sure that resident involvement is taking place and that back-room deals are not the way we do business. A group like this would help to keep us all honest."

Denver resident leader Sandy Douglas thinks it will help that *Making Connections* - Denver's history is well documented. "They are keeping good records, good history with diarists, Susan's notes at every meeting. There is good documentation.

"I think the history can continue to be maintained through the LME process with the hope that, at the end of the day, the LME will have all the guiding principles of *Making Connections*-Denver so that they will really implement those guiding principles. Hopefully the guiding principles will not just be on paper anymore, but we will be living them."

Denver partner Hipp had a similar perspective: "The diarist work is important in retaining the history and values of *Making Connections*. The challenge will be how to assure

"We need to keep long-term partners involved long enough to assure that, as new members come forward, they are made aware of the value of having an historic perspective. We need to have people who have enough passion to carry the message forward."

—Myrna Hipp

that those involved in the future are committed enough to actually take time to look at the historic perspective.

"We need to keep long-term partners involved long enough to assure that, as new members come forward, they are made aware of and indeed understand the value of having an historic perspective. We need to have people who have enough passion to carry the message forward."

White Center's Balahadia believes that the history and values will be retained because they are part of the organization that will be the LME. "White Center's goal is to retain the history and values of *Making Connections* and the Community Development Association (CDA). That's why I think this process has been so important: coming together to determine what the organization's new vision is.

"It's the retaining of the community values that's important. That was the reason why our organization [CDA] was chosen, because we reflected that. That means we have to stay in tune with the community, we have to stay on board."

Hartford's García emphasizes the role of the site coordinators, saying *Making Connections* will need "someone with a good sense of *Making Connections*' history to help them through the transition phase. This is what the coordinators can do...help to institutionalize *Making Connections* within both the community and the LME."

What will the operational challenges be?

The thought that is on nearly everybody's mind is the sheer amount of money that is needed to keep a site's work happening. White Center's Fujiwara counted 33 people who are at least partly supported through *Making Connections*.

Des Moines' Nicole Beaman articulates the question on many people's mind: *"When Casey decides to change their investment, what do we as partners do? How do we carry on?"*

The foundation's paper that was distributed in July 2007 explained its resource commitment for the next three years, which has alleviated a lot of the short-term concern about money. The question people continue to have is what happens after 2010.

Beyond the money, people didn't have a lot to say about the operational challenges, perhaps because the focus so far has been on selecting an LME and developing a governance structure that people are comfortable with.

Providence's Garry Bliss talked in general about these challenges: *"Ultimately this is about getting people to take on a job and function that is not inherent in either city government or any other entities. The fact of the matter is this work is being supported, funded and somewhat guided from the outside."*

"Among concrete issues to consider is where do the functions that the initiative is currently performing go?" Bliss also emphasized the challenge of building a *"common understanding"* about the work and honing *"a concrete, clear and identifiable list of measures we are trying to move."*

One operational challenge that several people discussed concerned the need to educate people and organizations that are new to *Making Connections* about the process of working with a foundation that has been deeply engaged in helping manage the sites for many years.

"The key issues are how does [the new LME] stay accountable to the community and how does it sustain the effort that's been carried on so far."

—Jim Diers

"I would feel badly for an LME that doesn't know what to expect from the process by which the foundation moves money," says one person. *"Not having that knowledge would make an LME quit. Everybody who has been working with local initiatives knows about this arduous process and that is an apprehension on their part. The foundation really needs to be clear and walk the LME through the money process so that the mystery is revealed."*

Des Moines' Wright also believes that LMEs need to know that the Casey Foundation, like any large institution, has a certain culture. *"We need them [our partners] to understand that this is the culture, and it's going to be the same thing coming to them. They have to get used to it so I'm not trying to hide it, or blow it up into something bigger. It just is."*

What will keep *Making Connections* accountable?

People have a range of thoughts about the Casey Foundation's role over the past seven years in pushing the sites to be accountable to certain standards, such as being able to demonstrate results and build "authentic demand."

But whatever they thought about the foundation's accountability role in the past, they all seemed to recognize that, as the foundation takes on a different role, each site needs to think about what mechanism will ensure that *Making Connections* stays accountable.

As White Center's Diers put it, *"The key issues are how does [the new LME] stay accountable to the community and how does it sustain the effort that's been carried on so far."*

Many people talked about the key role that residents can play in insuring accountability. Providence resident Perry thinks it comes down to "how the LME will be accountable to residents." To be accountable to residents, many people think the sites will need to figure out ways to keep residents at the center of the work, something that is addressed in the next section of this report.

Some people focused on other aspects of the accountability question. *"In the whole LME conversation,"* says Hartford's García, *"I haven't heard a lot about what plans are in place in the event that the LME can't sustain the work and the relationships among the community partners and with the foundation break down. Is there a course of action that can be taken?"*

"I think this needs to be thought out before the hand-off to avoid a possible crisis, or at least to be prepared to navigate a situation like this should it develop."

"Also, even if the relationship seems to be working out, I think a formal review process should be in place where the foundation can regularly examine whether the LME is supporting the work as well as it should and the LME can examine whether the foundation is supporting the LME as well as it should."

"The question should also be addressed about whether and how either party can opt out of the relationship."

Denver's Tripathi thinks the key is that the partners have an "ongoing conversation" that establishes and keeps refining an accountability structure. She says this has already been happening in Denver.

"We have been realistic in thinking, 'What if this marriage doesn't work?' We are really setting up an accountability structure for Making Connections-Denver, its partners and Mile High Unit-

"What plans are in place in the event that the LME can't sustain the work and the relationships among the community partners and with the foundation break down? Is there a course of action that can be taken?"

—Ana María García

ed Way. We are looking at that through a unified reporting structure. We will have criteria that will show if it's working.

"We know that some initiatives may need more time. We are all agreeing on the timeframe to do this work, and how to show the outcomes."

The executive director of the organization that will become White Center's LME sees this question from a different perspective. Aileen Balahadia worries about being held accountable for outcomes when "you don't have direct control" over many factors. In White Center, a big factor is the "really huge population changes...."

She adds, *"That conversation with the foundation about being held accountable for something you have no direct control over needs to happen. I don't know how to engage that. It's something that I'm really concerned about."*

"I'm hesitant to put down on paper what the LME will do because that makes it real. It's what we're going to be held to."

"This runs counter to the way a lot of nonprofits function, which is, 'You're responsible to what the contract or the grant says that you must do.' When you're responsible for a big change initiative, things have to be done differently. Is there going to be enough flexibility to be able to say, 'We've got these big goals,' but not get dinged if we don't reach exactly the population-level changes we want to accomplish?"

How can residents be kept at the center?

While many people think that residents can play a critical role in helping keep *Making Connections* accountable, this begs the question of how to make sure residents actually stay at the center of the work when management moves to an organization that may not have a lot of experience working with residents as equals. This implementation challenge generated a lot of reflection, by both residents and other partners.

As Shirley Webster from Indianapolis put it, *“My great concern is, once we set this in place, it will become something other than resident driven. We need input with power and impact on decisions.”*

She is encouraged by how the LME process has worked so far. *“It is a great working table. Nothing has come up we cannot work through. It has felt good to be on it so far. You can feel like you know something and there is always a lot to be learned.”*

Denver’s Hipp thinks that keeping residents at the center will definitely be a challenge *“because everyone is more comfortable in the space in which they’ve always operated. They haven’t been in a space where residents have a lot of input on the identification of issues, on design and program selection. To give the residents a place in the leadership and the governance and to really embrace that is going to be a challenge.”*

“Even now, in discussions with Mile High United Way (MHUW), their questions are really focused on production numbers rather than systems change.”

“I think we understand our vision. I think we still need to work on how we better articulate that vision. If MHUW can’t get comfortable with the concept of systems change and walking on that tightrope of patience, we probably will not be able to keep resident engagement strong, even if it is written into a formal agreement between Making Connections-Denver and MHUW.”

“My great concern is, once we set this in place, it will become something other than resident driven. We need input with power and impact on decisions.”

—Shirley Webster

A partner from a different site has a similar concern: *“More than anything else, I worry about the strong voice of residents being sustained. Despite all the admirable work [my site] has done, resident voice is hard to keep going and maintain. This is especially true [here] because Making Connections is just getting to the point where resident voice and leadership is actualized.”*

“This raises questions about how successful you can be in passing along something that takes so long to develop. Resident leadership and mobilization isn’t present in any of the missions for these organizations on this LME ad-hoc committee, whereas other Making Connections work isn’t far out of reach [for these organizations]. Looking around the table, I just don’t see a place where community voices are heard, respected and encouraged as part of the norm of doing business.”

To meet this challenge of keeping residents at the center, Hartford’s Ana-María García emphasizes the need to make this the main criterion for selecting an LME. *“We need to collectively know before we select an LME answers to questions like: What entity is going to carry that voice for residents and does it have a history of doing that? How well does a potential LME relate to the other partners? Can the entity bring all the partners together? The answers to these questions should be absolutely clear before the LME selection.”*

San Antonio’s Ramon Vasquez also thinks it all comes down to who is selected as the LME. *“If the right configuration is put together and West*

Side United Coalition (WSUC) is part of the configuration, then I think the interest of the residents will be maintained...."

A staff person of what will be Des Moines' LME says that her organization *"won't let the resident voices go."* Mary Martin adds that her organization also won't try to replace its voice for those of the "real residents."

White Center's Fujiwara agrees that it all depends on the LME: she says that the commitment to residents is *"at the core of her site's LME. At least that's what we're trying to do. It's their organization."*

"This initiative is supposed to be a community change initiative, changing institutions. At the very least, the LME ought to fully embrace and reflect the residents at the core of the work, and that means in their governance body."

Denver's Motika also thinks that her site's LME is committed to keeping residents at the center. *"The thing that has me encouraged is that United Way sees that Making Connections' resident work sets us apart and makes us different. They intellectually get that that's important. Keeping resident voices alive is extremely vital. United Way is attracted to us because of resident engagement."*

San Antonio's Dennis Campa says that his site will keep residents at the center by making them part of the LME's executive committee and *"involved in everything we do: decision-making, grants and support. They will be involved in the results that we commit to and the evaluation of the results. I think we're all committed to having residents be part of the decision-making process."*

Campa believes the key is raising the expectations of residents. *"I think the raised expectations will drive us to do better work. Resident optimism will sustain it."*

"We've had it easy and it's getting ready to NOT be that way. We may hire an executive director who looks good on paper, interviews well, but what do we do when they get authoritative? How do you work that out?"

—Julie Barrett

Not everyone however is as sanguine about these challenges. San Antonio's Vasquez has already been quoted about how this site's LME process was a "missed opportunity" for listening to residents (see page 9).

Jane Mullikin, a resident from Indianapolis, is also still a little wary, despite the voice residents had in the LME process. *"We need to share the administrative side of things more. We are at a point now where we need to know more than five line items [in the budget]. We just started a project, and I need to know how much money is available to us."*

"There is all this talk about stuff in different buckets. Bring me a line item. What is the budget? We need to know at the beginning of this serious, getting-it-done phase which buckets are too tight and which ones aren't."

"We need to know everything that the consultants are being told about administering all these entities prior to the day they go away. I don't think they are trying to hide anything and it has worked this way, but it needs to change right now."

"But I have been exceedingly impressed with how Casey has operated. So much is there that I have not thought about."

Julie Barrett from Indianapolis anticipates power struggles between residents and other partners. *"We've had it easy and it's getting ready to NOT be that way. We may hire an executive director who looks good on paper, interviews well, but what do we do when they get authoritative? How do you work that out? How do you pressure that person to see your point of view?"*

"They might not know how to be grassroots. It's not structured, it's not particularly nice all the time, and you have to be thick-skinned and not take it all personally. But that usually works against the residents, not the partners."

"We have to keep it so that people don't get pissed and walk away. This is a challenge for partners and residents. It's easier to say that the residents are hostile, but we're professional and our time is valuable just like yours. And that has to be seen and we have to assert ourselves in those things."

Providence's Perry sees a similar potential struggle. *"Another challenge is building the capacity of organizations to embrace both the resident perspective as well as residents being engaged in the decision-making processes around the table [as opposed to merely informing decisions]. So, the question is, how do we create authentic resident voice within this new Local Management Entity?"*

"Like any other organization, the resident involvement piece will be new to them. I would like to be able to be at the table as more than an informant, but as a decision maker. I want to be able to be influential, and to help other residents and my community."

Another resident thinks the residents themselves have the ability to maintain their decision-making role. *"I guarantee you, if the funders on the board try to pull rank, the residents will very quickly leave."*

But in a year or two, asks another resident, which residents will continue to participate, and will they have the same willingness to

"I think that you'll be able to keep resident voices because the residents that are engaged have a direct stake and they feel the power in being vocal about that. But I don't know beyond that. I'm not sure how deep the pool of residents is."

—Tony Macklin

assert themselves? Elaine Cates from Indianapolis notes that new residents must be brought in, but these people haven't had the same training and experiences as current residents.

She thinks a "transition period" is needed *"where the old timers might need to hold their hands for six months and have conversations before and after the meetings to tell them this is why certain things happened. You just can't stick somebody in there and not have a true understanding of things. I still get confused sometimes."*

Tony Macklin, an Indianapolis partner, shares this concern. *"I think that you'll be able to keep resident voices because the residents that are engaged have a direct stake and they feel the power in being vocal about that. But I don't know beyond that. I'm not sure how deep the pool of residents is."*

San Antonio's Ximenes is very straightforward in stating what will keep residents at the center: *"Make spaces for them. Give them legitimate opportunities to participate and have a voice. Provide them with training and technical assistance in the areas that they need. Do things that help them to integrate with staff and consultants. Intentionally do things to help those three groups integrate. Maintain a commitment to do it."*

Hartford's Figueroa believes the problem will come if the residents involved in *Making Connections* are not *"in touch with their*

constituencies and connected to them based on their common concern for certain issues that impact them and their families. It would help if resident leaders and their constituencies were more connected to the community organizing activities in Hartford that are now being funded by Making Connections.”

Being connected to a constituency gives the individual residents who sit at the table much more power, Figueroa suggests. But San Antonio’s Vasquez thinks that even this connection won’t be enough, that whenever it comes to vote on a critical issue, residents will lose.

“For us it has to be consensus. That’s the only way we’ll feel safe.”

How do you keep long-time partners engaged now that one local entity has primary responsibility?

One resident succinctly captures the potential problem: “I think there is the danger that the other funders will see this as a [local LME] thing and I think there’s the danger that [the LME] will see it as their thing.”

For White Center’s Diers, it comes down to money. “Are the partners going to stay engaged if there are no other resources on the table that are helping leverage their participation?”

A Providence partner has a different focus related to resources, asking whether there will be resources to help compensate the time required to keep partners engaged. “You have to give people the resources to do that. People will be expected to attend a lot of meetings, and three hours a week of an executive director’s time is huge.”

This person thinks compensation should be spelled out in partner grant agreements. “It simply must be acknowledged that time is a big resource, especially for organizations that are not very big.

“What would help me to stay engaged is to have the demand on my time and energy minimized. I just can’t afford to take hours away from

“It simply must be acknowledged that time is a big resource, especially for organizations that are not very big. What would help me to stay engaged is to have the demand on my time and energy minimized.”

my work for meetings. Therefore, lay out the expectations, allow me to do good work, give me the opportunity to engage with other partners at various tables, and have me check in periodically. This would make all the difference in the world.”

Others worry that the stresses of choosing the LME will cause long-time partners to step back from *Making Connections*. San Antonio’s Guadalupe Iruegas said that at least some residents are bitter about the LME selection process and its results.

San Antonio’s transition coordinator Linda Ximenes believes that, “The foundation needs to help and mend relationships.”

San Antonio’s Campa says that, “It’s unfortunate that it became competitive. Actually we offered two different options. It was really two different proposals. If it became competitive, that was unfortunate. If the other group had been selected, I would have done whatever I could to support them, as long as there was commitment to results and resident involvement.”

A partner in a different site also worries that the competition among partners will eventually cause some to leave. “There are people at the table being asked to decide on whom the LME will be, but who want the LME to reside at their own shop. This leads me to believe that there are hidden agendas.

“There are people on this committee trying to steer things in a particular direction and I would prefer that people with a vested interest not be at the table.”

Another partner from this site agreed that there have been tensions. *“At some points in the process there have been instances of participants saying things that rubbed other participants the wrong way. Some of that friction has carried over and spilled into subsequent meetings.”*

“I do think those situations were handled very well. For instance, at the meeting that followed this particularly difficult one, these former issues were discussed, but it was made clear that once addressed, we needed to move on.”

White Center’s Balahadia also worries about losing partners, but for a different reason. She points out that the types of people who have been on the Partners’ Group are the same people who are asked to join other organizations and initiatives.

“What do we have to do to keep them on the hook, committed to White Center, committed to these powerful partnerships, and committed to these high impact kinds of things? It still remains to be seen what the best way to do that is. We need a lot of thinking from the Partners’ Group about how they think they want to be involved.”

San Antonio’s Campa, however, thinks that keeping other partners involved will be *“a pretty straightforward proposition. Anyone willing to commit to the three result areas and willing to have residents involved in it—we’ll welcome in. They have to be willing to help us work to achieve it.”*

Providence resident leader Perry thinks the key is for the new LME to continue to build relationships. *“The LME will need to continue to build upon those relationships. If the LME tries to see this work as their own and tries to change the way things are being done, partners will be lost.”*

Des Moines’ Tony Wilson makes a similar point, saying that the keys are *“keeping productive communication, conflict resolution and team building—trying to get people to buy into the process. There are people and processes already in*

“The biggest challenge going forward is, will the entity have any life beyond handing out the dollars of AECF? I don’t think it’s a given that other funders will choose to put their funds through that. I think that’s kind of a big leap.”

—Bill Taft

place, and part of it is trying to fold those others in.”

White Center’s Savusa agrees, saying that, *“The fact that we’re going through the LME process doesn’t change the relationships we have with the other partners. We want everybody to be supportive of the LME process, and that’s part of the relationship.”*

Indianapolis Making Connections partner, Bill Taft, worries mostly about the other funding partners. *“The biggest challenge going forward is, will the entity have any life beyond handing out the dollars of AECF? I don’t think it’s a given that other funders will choose to put their funds through that or in partnership with that. I think that’s kind of a big leap.”*

He thinks it is a big leap in part because, in some sites, the LME will be a new organization. *“Early on, one thing people didn’t want was a new organization, but that’s what we have. I don’t know how honest the funders are going to be once they are back in their offices and in decision-making mode.”*

Des Moines’ Beaman thinks one key will be how well the other partners respond to Making Connections *“strong desire for resident engagement.”* She thinks more work needs to be done on defining this *“so we can have a common understanding. I think we’re getting there, but I don’t think it’s done.”*

What should the Casey Foundation's future roles be?

5

When people reflected on the foundation's future roles, they focused on two issues:

- How does the foundation balance the need to keep the work accountable while letting go enough to allow the sites to assume more control of the work on the ground?
- What support will the foundation provide in the future, especially financial support, after the end of the three-year transition period?

Will the Casey Foundation step back too far, or not far enough?

"The question of whether we are stepping back enough is a really important question. We are going to have to learn some new behavior. But at least we've tried to set out the three things we care about—results, residents, data. Hold us accountable around these three. If we begin to have too many opinions about things other than these three, tell us that is none of our business."

—Ralph Smith

Some people are concerned about whether the foundation will be able to step back far enough after directing *Making Connections* for more than seven years. Others have the opposite concern.

A Providence partner expresses the first concern: "Frankly, there is a lot of prescriptive stuff that can stand in the way of smart people doing good work. It's okay to set guidelines and expectations, but how things get done has to be left locally. The foundation should take a giant step back once everyone agrees on what needs to be done."

"I think the foundation can be most helpful as a resource and provider of expertise on specific issues or with technical assistance. There are certainly resources beyond money that the foundation brings to the table. Their knowledge, expertise and best practices are awesome."

"But I think it's time to see what really happens in a community when you let smart people take those resources and do the best for the places where they live and work."

White Center's Diers shares this concern: "Sometimes it's too engaged. It seems like it has a sense of how it wants things to happen. Some of that's fair, since they're putting a lot of money into it. But part of the purpose of the foundation from the start was to make sure that this thing was community-driven, and those two come into conflict sometimes...."

Hulse says, "I am guessing it will be a challenge on both sides. There will be some changes for everyone. How will Casey respond to that? Casey will be used to a level of response and control with sites, and now our site is accountable to a board. It is one thing to be engaged and another to be directing."

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—Monty Hulse

"I have asked that there be deep discussion between Casey and our site on expectations ... more detail rather than less. We are talking about a grant agreement with a detailed set of expectations, some of which involve process and some of which involve outcomes."

Hulse thinks that, while all this is easy to say and to commit to paper, in practice it may be much harder. *"Casey has been used to being very hands on and they cannot do that the same way."*

For one thing, the site coordinators will no longer be paid through *Making Connections*, *"so the level of interaction that has been common will no longer be the case."*

This person offers the example of a Casey Foundation request for an extra piece of data with a one-week deadline. *"If the engaged investor identified what it needs at the front end, they cannot go back and impose that."* She adds that the other deeply engaged, long-term partners will also *"need to figure out how to step back in specific ways."*

San Antonio's Vasquez would also like the foundation to more specifically define its "engaged investor" role. He says he "agrees with the concept," but he doesn't know what it means.

San Antonio Site Team Leader Victor Azios focused on the impact of the foundation changing its role. *"I think the community is feeling the early phases of change in the transition from the foundation being a catalytic manager to becoming an engaged investor. They're not used to it. They are used to the foundation being in a more nurturing, more facilitative role as a catalytic manager."*

Denver's Hipp is concerned about Casey disengaging *too much*. *"I think Casey has to be on guard. I think it might be very easy for Casey, in an effort to promote local ownership and to build new partnerships, to yield to LME pressure to fall into traditional ways of doing business."*

In essence, White Center's Fujiwara agrees. *"I go back and forth. With the LME, there's a*

"I go back and forth. With the LME, there's a new, fresh opportunity and the foundation ought to stay out of the way and be more of a traditional funder. On the other hand, we're in this experiment together and they ought to be sharing some of the risks and staying involved."

—Theresa Fujiwara

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"On the other hand, we're in this experiment together and they ought to be sharing some of the risks and staying involved, not only through funding, but through access to national resources or best practices or support around research and evaluation, all those things that will help us sustain the good pieces of the work. I don't know if there's a happy in-between. I can see the pros and cons going either way."

Providence's Perry thinks that the foundation can't step back too far because it must continue to play a role in insuring accountability. *"My only concern is that the foundation will pull back regarding accountability. They are a strong accountability presence."*

She says she knows that the LME will have performance measures. *"But without a strong presence, I wonder about how the LME will act."*

"The foundation should be very clear about their values and expectations of the LME. Perhaps a message that, while they are not managing, they are watching. I think they should be very clear throughout the transition process that staff support will contribute to the success of the transition. They also need to be very clear about the way we do business."

A funding partner thinks the foundation must continue to push on the role of residents. She says Casey staff have been *“good at reminding people of the role of the residents and the importance of their work because there’s a tendency for funders to just go with something.”* She says Casey needs to continue *“to play a role in preserving the strengths of the residents...”*

All these concerns stated, most people welcome the increased ability they will have to shape—and be accountable for—*Making Connections* in their cities. Des Moines’ Tony Wilson says that he is “excited” that the foundation will be stepping back *“because it gives us more opportunities locally to be responsive to local needs, rather than meeting the foundation’s national needs. We can tailor our program better and have a little more freedom.”*

What should the Casey Foundation continue to provide the sites?

While at least some people don’t want what they see as the mandates from Casey to continue, most do want the technical assistance to continue.

“One thing that the foundation can offer, which I think far exceeds dollars, is technical assistance capacity,” states Hartford’s García. *“The ability to bring in people to help local folks think through issues and the ability to expose them to best practices is the greatest strength of the foundation as an engaged investor.”*

“If I were the executive director of an LME, this is what I would be counting on. It would make me less dependent on the money because it would help me attract local investment dollars.”

Another partner appreciates the foundation’s willingness to *“continue to invest in things that were hard to get funding for, like resident engagement and leadership development.”* She says this is *“the cornerstone of strengthening individuals.”*

“The ability to bring in people to help local folks think through issues and the ability to expose them to best practices is the greatest strength of the foundation as an engaged investor.”

—Ana María García

She adds, *“For them to recognize that gives me great hope around a partnership. If we strengthen individuals, then we strengthen communities.”*

“They do know so much, and have been able to bring a lot of information into their work through their learning across sites—there’s something undeniably rich in that. But there also has to be a place for local learning, and there needs to be a balance.”

A partner from another site thinks Casey should continue its “real strong role” of encouraging and training residents.

Similarly, White Center’s Savusa adds that Casey *“should just provide the money necessary for keeping community engagement and resident leadership in place.”*

Des Moines’ Wright thinks that training is important, but the focus should move more onto sites learning from each other, rather than from the foundation. *“There should be cross-site meetings and trainings where we can learn from each other. It seems these meetings are all directed toward the front, and not from each other. More sites should be involved in planning and designing, rather than these things being designed for them.”*

Denver’s Broder makes a somewhat similar point, talking about Casey’s need to continue to learn with the sites, especially about how to “replicate place-based initiatives.”

She adds that, “Casey has written a lot of pages about this and I think they get clearer as they have to write more. That’s understandable because it’s brand new. It’s like peeling an onion. You get deeper with the layers. I think we are forcing them to get clearer. We went from the general idea to the next level. Now we are going from that level to an even deeper level of answers.”

Denver’s Tripathi also makes this point. “Casey has worked with 10 sites. They could help us learn what worked and what didn’t for other sites. We want them to inform and educate us in lessons learned, data and research and evaluation. We want them to inform us what collaboration means to them and vice versa.

“We would like to see clear, tangible products from Casey so we are not in isolation in Denver, but are part of this work nationally. We want to learn from Seattle and the other sites so that we can think about how we can use their experiences and insights in Denver.”

Broder thinks Casey can help by calling together “the three partners: Casey, the Partners’ Board and United Way.” She explains: “We would all need to understand what this new phase means to each organization individually, as well as what it means collectively.

“I would hope that they would say, ‘This is an exciting new time. This is the next stage of Making Connections and this is how we can all be working together toward the end.’ I think they need to continue to be available if we have questions or concerns or ideas.”

Hartford’s Figueroa focuses on the need for technical assistance “around values and data-based decision making.” The foundation needs to continue TA like this because “the TA providers from Casey ‘get it.’”

White Center’s Fujiwara would have liked “lessons learned from other community change efforts” from the beginning. “This isn’t new. It’s not the first effort. I haven’t had time to read about all the possible community change efforts that are out there to compare, contrast, [to see]

“What we are coming to realize as local sites is that we may want the foundation to be engaged in many different ways that we hadn’t expected. There should be a lot more thought and feedback from the sites about this.”

—Robyn Frye

whether we’re similar, dissimilar. It would be helpful if they could distill that information so that we would know what happens typically. Where have other community change efforts failed or succeeded?”

She would also like more evidence that would support the case for “investing in community/resident leadership and ‘authentic partnership.’” She thinks “harder evidence is needed to sustain the work over time.”

Frye thinks that many of the sites’ needs for support are not yet known. “What we are coming to realize as local sites is that we may want the foundation to be engaged in many different ways that we hadn’t expected. Therefore, I think there should be a lot more thought and feedback from the sites about this. The LME compositions are emerging as very different and creative for each site, so each site will likely have its own unique needs.”

What happens after 2010?

While there is now a lot more clarity about the Casey Foundation’s commitment over the next three years, many people expressed anxiety about what happens when this period ends. White Center’s Diers communicates this concern: “I don’t think it’s particularly sustainable unless Making Connections or Casey is willing to continue investing money at the level it has been.”

He adds, *"I don't think the current model is sustainable, in terms of how the programs and services are delivered. It's pretty dependant on Casey money, and a lot of the work is done by staff, by consultants. I mean, how are you going to keep a diarist on? How are you going to staff all these workgroups? Who's going to attend the workgroups?"*

White Center's Fujiwara believes, *"They need to get to a point where they can be clear about expectations and levels of commitments they're willing to make over what length of time. Because now we're talking about the survival of a community-based organization, at least for us. There has to be some level of predictability and certainty about the foundation's level of commitment over the next several years."*

"We've been able to roll with it as a site team and negotiate and get what we can. But for an organization, it needs more predictability. That's going to be probably hard for the foundation."

White Center's Balahadia, director of the community organization that will be taking the LME role, explained why the resource commitment has been so important, and not only over the next three years. She points out that her organization is going through a huge change to become the LME.

"We are investing in this, we do this reorganization, we shift our vision, our mission statement, we extend our boundaries. But in three years, what happens?"

Betsy Bikoff from Indianapolis expressed a similar concern: *"If Casey walks away in three years that will be a problem. I think they can play a reduced role, but if they walk away, that will be a real problem. I'm not so sure it can sustain itself over that period of time."*

For White Center's Balahadia, the key question is what kind of longer-term financial commitment does the foundation have in mind? *"What does it mean to be an 'engaged investor?' Does that mean that, instead of \$2.5 million, we're going to get \$100,000? Let's talk about dollar resources, technical assistance resources,*

"We are investing in this, we do this reorganization, we shift our vision, our mission statement, we extend our boundaries. But in three years, what happens?"

—Aileen Balahadia

consultants, any other kinds of resources the foundation can bring.

"And if that [reduced foundation investment] is the case, then the next challenge would be trying to convince others of how worthy an experiment this was and how it should continue. Not only talking about this 10-year experiment, but talking about what is the next 10-year experiment going to be? What's the next thing to build on all the great work of the last 10 years?"

At least two people think the key is for Casey *"to help figure out potential funding streams that will replace what the foundation has invested,"* in the words of Providence's Bliss. He thinks this could *"help alleviate whatever anxiety exists within an agency that has committed to a certain level of work."*

Providence's Frye agrees. *"We need help in being creative about drawing resources from multiple places and blending private and public dollars."*

One resident sees the silver lining of the Casey Foundation significantly reducing its financial support. *"Whenever you are dependent on a large entity like that for financial resources, you are very much indebted to do pretty much what they want."*

"I don't think it's a good situation to be in. The foundation hasn't taken advantage of people. But it's a true sense of empowerment to strike out on your own. In the beginning it might be a little hard, but if you keep at it and build support, it will work."

Appendix 1:

Questions for Participants in the *Making Connections* Process of Selecting a Local Management Entity

1. What is the process? Who's been involved in this process? What's been the role of residents in your target neighborhood?
2. How do you think the process has been going? What have been the challenges? How are you dealing with them?
3. What do you think about the Foundation's role in this process? Have its expectations been clear? Has it provided enough support? The right kind of support? What other support do you need?
4. Have the timelines been realistic? Have they been applied with enough flexibility?
5. Have you thought about challenges after the Local Management Entity is picked, such as: How can MC keep the other (non-LME) partners engaged? What would keep you engaged? How can a strong voice for residents be maintained within another organization? How can the history and values of MC be retained?
6. What are your thoughts about the Foundation's role as an "engaged investor" after an LME is selected? What do you think the Foundation should do to orient the LME?

Additional Questions for residents:

1. What supports—training, coaching, materials, being involved over time — were the most helpful to you as you began to take up leadership of this process? Would other supports have been helpful?
2. What will keep you engaged after the local management entity is selected?
3. What are some of the challenges you have gone through in this process? How have you dealt with them? What have you learned from going through this process? Any advice you'd give others?

This is one of a series of reports, stories and reflections produced by The Diarist Project about the work of *Making Connections*, a long-term initiative to make tough neighborhoods more supportive of children and their families. *Making Connections* is supported nationally by the **Annie E. Casey Foundation**. The Diarist Project is a new approach the foundation is using to document and learn from this initiative.

This report is based on 36 interviews conducted by diarists in seven MC sites: **Danielle Corriveau** in Denver; **Kristin Senty** in Des Moines; **Mike Salius** in Hartford, **Will Fay** and **Karen Ruprecht** in Indianapolis; **Sally Turner** in Providence; **Linda Wilson** in San Antonio; and **Bob Shimabukuro** in White Center/Boulevard Park.

Tim Saasta wrote this report. **Grace Giermek** collected and analyzed the interview transcripts, selected quotes that communicated key points and helped edit this report.

For more information about the Casey Foundation and *Making Connections*, go to www.AECF.org. To learn more about the diarist process and to read other diarist reports, stories and reflections about the *Making Connections* work, go to www.DiaristProject.org.

REFLECTIONS

on Making Connections

